



**What is CalWORKs Cares** - CalWORKs Cares-Grossmont College is a response to Grossmont College's shift to remote/online learning in the wake of COVID-19, and our commitment to continue to serve and provide resources to our students.

---

## This Week's Topic: UNCERTAINTY AND ANXIETY

By: Haile Wright, ASW, CalWORKs Counselor

Many of us are probably feeling like a lot has changed, changed quickly, and with little warning. Some of us may have begun to think beyond the cancellation of on campus classes, and began to ask what this means for the rest of the semester. It's very likely the questions have not stopped there, and better yet where are the answers to these questions? Well, if the uncertainty of your academics is causing you to worry, we offer you some tools to give a try.

**1. Write it Out:** Writing down your worries can be a helpful way to get your worries out of your brain, and onto paper. Sometimes when we keep a fear or several "what if... insert worst case scenarios" in our head we continue to replay it over and over. We think that by giving our energy to "the worry", we are somehow going to come to a comforting resolution. However, this is often not the case because there are too many factors to account for what can influence or surround the worst case scenario. Instead, try opting for a "Worry Jar". Write down your fear and place it in a jar. By doing so you are validating that something concerns you, and you're also making the choice to not let it consume your thoughts. If you find it absolutely necessary, you can return to the jar and evaluate if things have changed since you last gave energy to this worry, although it is recommended to avoid revisiting "the worry" as long as possible.

**2. Exercise:** Studies have shown that exercise or even simply taking a walk, can not only have physical health benefits but can also improve mood and mental health. Please keep in mind that social distancing or keeping a 6ft radius between you and someone else is the recommendation of health experts at this time. If going outside has you concerned, consider playing some music indoors from your favorite playlist or youtube. Dancing is a fun way to get some exercise without having to leave the home, and the kids will love it too!

**3. Gratitude or Focusing on What's in Our Control:** It can be hard to focus on what is going right, when it feels like there is so much happening that is less than favorable. This is why I offer you two options in one to reduce your anxiety. According to Harvard Health, "Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships." When it comes to activating gratitude you can do so in several ways: reflecting on the past (remembering positive memories), focusing on the present (not taking for granted what is positive in your life), or the future (maintaining a positive and hopeful outlook for things to come).



If you're not in the mood for gratitude and prefer to spend your energy being proactive, then focusing on what is in your control, is the right move for you! What's in your control? Do what you can to keep yourself healthy, get enough sleep, stay hydrated by drinking water, eat food that gives you energy, and wash your hands frequently (The Center for Disease Control recommends washing your hands for 20 seconds- for a more complete guide on hand washing, check out their website, <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>)

**4. Deep Breathing:** Deep breathing is one of my favorite tools for reducing anxiety and stress, because it requires no additional materials and you can do it almost anywhere (although a quiet place is recommended). According to University of Michigan Health, deep breathing sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. Physical symptoms you might experience while stressed, like fast breathing, high blood pressure, and increased heart rate, can be reduced when you practice deep breathing.

Here is a quick deep breathing exercise called "Belly Breathing" from University of Michigan:

1. Sit or lie flat in a comfortable position.
2. Put one hand on your belly just below your ribs and the other hand on your chest.
3. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and let your belly push your hand out. Your chest should not move.
4. Breathe out through pursed lips as if you were whistling. Feel the hand on your belly go in, and use it to push all the air out.
5. Do this breathing 3 to 10 times. Take your time with each breath.
6. Notice how you feel at the end of the exercise.

If you prefer to be guided through your deep breathing, here is a link from youtube demonstrating how to do Belly Breathing. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wemm-i6XHr8> . This is another great tool to share with kids at home!

**5. Seeking support and Stay Connected:** During tough times it can be helpful to remember you're not alone. You belong to a community! Whether your community is your family, your neighbors, your fellow Grossmont students, or all the above, you're not alone during these challenging times. It is important to protect your health and others around you by limiting physical contact to as few people as possible, however this does not mean emotionally isolating too. Instead of going to a friend or neighbor's house, utilize technology to stay in touch. Call or text a friend or family member to check in, share your concerns and extend support to each other. Also consider utilizing social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram as a way to stay connected to folks who do not live locally.



# CalWORKs Cares - Grossmont College



## Sources:

Healthbeat. "Giving Thanks Can Make You Happier." *Giving Thanks Can Make You Happier*, Harvard Health Publishing, 2010, [www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier](http://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier).

Healthwise Staff. "Stress Management: Breathing Exercises for Relaxation." *Stress Management: Breathing Exercises for Relaxation | Michigan Medicine*, Healthwise, 2018, [www.uofmhealth.org/health-library/uz2255](http://www.uofmhealth.org/health-library/uz2255).

Margarita Tartakovsky, M., 2020. *9 Ways To Ward Off Your Worries*. [online] World of Psychology. Available at: <<https://psychcentral.com/blog/9-ways-to-ward-off-your-worries/>> \

Raypole, Crystal. "Physical Symptoms of Anxiety: How Does It Feel." *Healthline*, Healthline Media a Red Ventures Company, 2005, [www.healthline.com/health/physical-symptoms-of-anxiety#bottom-line](http://www.healthline.com/health/physical-symptoms-of-anxiety#bottom-line).

Sharma, Ashish, et al. "Exercise for Mental Health." *Primary Care Companion to the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, Physicians Postgraduate Press, Inc., 2006, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1470658](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1470658)

Spaeder, Karen. "Benefits of Deep Breathing." *LIVESTRONG.COM*, Leaf Group, 2019, [www.livestrong.com/article/92264-benefits-deep-breathing/](http://www.livestrong.com/article/92264-benefits-deep-breathing/).

"When and How to Wash Your Hands." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 3 Oct. 2019, [www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html).



**A note from the writer:** While things have been operating differently due to the campus' and nation's response to COVID-19, my commitment to supporting and counseling Grossmont College students remains unwavering. Feel free to contact me at [haile.wright@gcccd.edu](mailto:haile.wright@gcccd.edu) with questions, comments, or topics you would like to see in upcoming newsletters.