

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF CAPS AT DUKE KUNSHAN UNIVERSITY

Congratulations TO THE CLASS OF 2022!

Class of 2022, congratulations on your graduation and best wishes for your next adventure! Commencement is a ceremony that symbolizes evidence of hard work, a conclusion, and a new start! The COVID-19 pandemic has definitely filled the world with uncertainty. This is especially true for the Class of 2022 graduates. It's completely normal to feel overwhelmed and uneasy when you try to celebrate your achievements during this unprecedented time in the world. Here are some tips to take some time to celebrate your graduation and learn how to deal with unpredictability.

Remember that what dreams and goals that you have for your life are not over. This moment is a moment in time. It's not your entire life. And also, remember to put that into scale.

Take the pressure off of yourself for control things that are uncontrollable. You are already doing the best as you can.

Prioritize yourself in whatever way possible that brings you peace to be able to deal with the lows of life because that's just how it is. You can't avoid the negativity.

Go easy on yourself, give yourself grace, and go with the unplanned.



Graduating during the pandemic[1] [2]

The graduates in particular endured a lot of uncertainty and unpredictability. Psychotherapist Akua K. Boateng, Ph.D., attributes some of the depression and anxiety that recent graduates face to the sudden loss of a schedule, order, or structure in day-to-day activities. "A lot of globalized uncertainty kind of exacerbates all of those pre-natural transitional experiences that you have, therefore staying connected to others going through the same experience is so important."

Here are some tips for reconnect and maintain relationships:

1. Start small.

Doing small acts of kindness for others significantly reduced loneliness and social conflict. It can be as simple as checking in how someone is doing. Supporting others not only strengthens our existing relationships but also help establish new connections.

2. Give people a pass.

Have you lost touch with someone over the pandemic? Before pruning this relationship, reach out and genuinely find out how they are doing. Instead of assuming the worst in others, try to recognize other possible reasons for their behavior because each of us is struggling in the pandemic.

3. Express gratitude.

Gratitude can increase social bonding, reduces loneliness, and leads to greater satisfaction in relationships. Reach out to a friend, a professor/staff, or family member and take the time to let them know how much you appreciate them or something they did. A little gratitude can go a long way in building and strengthening our relationships.

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Strict confidentiality will always be maintained when utilizing CAPS services.

The graduation will be a bittersweet reminder of both what COVID has taken from us as well as what it has given us. Remember that you are doing the best you can amidst this uncertainty.

If you are a member of the Class of 2022, try to connect with some friends or professors and express gratitude before you graduate! If you are a friend of someone from the Class of 2022, make sure to connect with them, check in, say hi, or express gratitude!

POST-GRADUATION STRESS[3]

Commencement is underway and many students will be excited or even relieved. Homework, deadlines, and grades are traditional stressors and commencement signals an end to all of that stress. Once those stressors are gone, it may prove difficult at first to adjust to what would then be the graduate's "new normal." The "unknown" may add anxiety for the graduates, who may experience some post-graduation stress:

Symptoms Post-graduation Stress (may present few weeks or months after the commencement):

- Feeling you are not in control of your life
- Feeling a lack of support after commencement
- Feelings of failure if unable to find work in the area of specialty in a reasonable length of time
- Sleeplessness and irritability
- Avoidance of normal, everyday activities

Whatever the causes of Post-graduation stress, these two steps can be helpful to any graduate:

1. Make a plan

You may or may not know what it is you want to do in the future but that should not stop you from making a plan and taking action. Self-esteem and self-worth are related to behaviors. Map the first six months that follow graduation and generate some positive action and the positive feelings will follow. You may choose to take a vacation or start an internship for the summer or do something else. No matter what your choice is, having a plan of action can help organize your thoughts and reduce stress.

2. Keep priorities in perspective

This post-graduation stress is entirely normal and presently common, and you are not alone. Take control of your emotions, allow yourself to feel blue, share your feelings, but then work your way out of your blues by focusing on your positive factors, including pride in what you've achieved. Next, consider new goals and a new plan to reach these new goals. Accepting new challenges is the prescription to motivate you out of the graduation blues.

Reference:

- [1] <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/graduating-during-a-pandemic>
- [2] <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/social-life/202106/graduating-the-pandemic>
- [3] <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-media-psychology-effect/201205/managing-pcsd-post-commencement-stress-disorder>

