



# MANAGING STUDENT ANXIETY



In this time of COVID-19, we are in full transition to an online learning environment. For many of our students, this is a source of stress and even loss, for some. Levels of anxiety are higher than usual and anxiety, by its nature, is contagious and can interfere with learning. Here are some strategies to use to mitigate stress and anxiety in an online learning environment.

## 1 self-check

Engage in some self-reflection. "Who am I bringing into the classroom? Am I anxious and stressed myself?" Think about how you are managing your own affect and behavior. Model calm and positivity.



## 2 maintain growth mindset

Reframe any fixed mindset, either student's or yours, that focuses on all that is difficult, overwhelming, or cannot be achieved. Focus instead on student resourcefulness, skill, and resilience.

# 3 embrace social presence

Prioritize a social presence to promote human connection and engagement in the online learning environment. Building community humanizes the learning experience and helps all to feel valued and a sense of belonging. Belongingness impacts student well-being and learning outcomes.



# 4

## give structure, structure, structure

The importance of structure cannot be stressed enough. In times of uncertainty, having a predictable routine and structure reduces stress and anxiety. Provide a clear format for your class with consistent elements.



# 5 set clear expectations

In parallel to a consistent structure, set clear expectations for student behavior, engagement, and performance. Pair verbal with written instructions. Anxiety can limit what one takes in and processes, so repetition and reinforcement are important.





# 6 prioritize connecting

Build in constant interaction, even in asynchronous teaching formats. Create opportunities for students to interact with one another, to break into groups and mix it up. Remember the best practice of faculty-driven group assignments to avoid cliques or exclusion. Send frequent messages to students that are encouraging and respectful.

# 7 break it down

Avoid having high stakes assignments that determine competence or quality of performance. This can contribute to students feeling overwhelmed and discouraged. Instead, take both content and evaluation in smaller chunks to allow students to grow and learn.



# 8 practice compassion

Be flexible and forgiving during a time of high stress. Practice kindness wherever you can. Be accessible to your students. While no one expects you to be on duty 24/7, let students know the parameters of your availability. Extend grace to students and to yourself. We are all trying as best as we can.