**Getting Started: Creating Your Emergency Self-Care Plan**

*Why is it necessary to do this?*

Finding solutions for oneself during challenging times can be incredibly daunting. It’s crucial to have a prepared strategy in place for such situations.

*What should this plan entail?*

It should encompass 3 key aspects: **Actions to Take, Thoughts to Cultivate, and Pitfalls to Avoid**

**1. Actions to Take** – Creating these lists in advance will spare you from having to contemplate what to do during a self-care emergency, which would only add to your stress.

**Make a list of what you can do when you are upset or distressed that will be beneficial for you.**

* 1. What could I do that will help me to relax?
     + Deep breathing exercises, listening to music, journaling or mindful meditation
     + Physical exercise, aromatherapy, yoga, guided imagery, or socializing
  2. What could you do that you already enjoy doing?
     + Cooking, crafting, writing poems, reading a book, watching a funny movie
     + Painting, bowling, going on a hike

**Make a list of people you can contact when you need support.**

* 1. Label the list by asking yourself the following questions…
     + Who will remind me to follow my self-care plan?
     + Who will encourage me to get out and do something fun?
     + Who will come over and be a shoulder to cry on?
     + Who do I like to call when I am lonely?
     + Who helps me when I feel anxious?

**2.Thoughts to Cultivate** – Incorporating these cultivated thoughts into an emergency self-care plan provides you with a mental toolkit to navigate distressing situations with a more positive and composed mindset.

**Make a list of positive things to say to yourself that feed your thoughts.**

* 1. Instead of saying “I got a 69 on this exam and it tells me that I shouldn’t be in medical school... the response should be “This is a grade that tells me that I need to study more or differently”.
  2. Think of what you would say to a struggling friend and speak that same encouragement to yourself.

**3.Pitfalls to Avoid** – Creating this list in advance empowers you to avoid harmful behaviors and develop healthier coping strategies.

- Do not stay in the house all day.

- Do not stay in bed all day.

- Do not listen to sad music.

- Do not drink alcohol to feel better.

Finally, Grab a 3x5 notecard and write a mini-plan for yourself labeling it 1,2, and 3 with a specific tips for yourself on it using what you already know about yourself. Put the card in your backpack or somewhere that is easily accessible at all times or take a pic of it and put on your phone. Look at it frequently.

**The Office of Student Affairs**