

Supporting College Students in a COVID-19 World

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Agenda

- About Emerging Adults...
- Anticipating Psychological Needs of Students
- Evidence-based Strategies for Young Adults struggling with anxiety and mood symptoms
- Existing and Novel models for assessing psychological stress
- Organizational strategies to meet psychological needs
- Promoting Wellness on Campus
- Maintaining developmental tasks of emerging adulthood

Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (2000) & Emerging Adults

- 18 - 29 years old
- Identity exploration
- Self-Focus
- Possibilities
- Instability
- Feeling in between
- Occurring in all developed countries across socioeconomic groups



Cultural Shift in 2000s

Young Adults

- Brain isn't fully developed until 20s
- More enter college after high school (66%)- extends dependency past age 18
- More returning home after college (40%) due to economic recession / trouble finding employment
- Marriage is 5 years later than prior generation

Caregivers

- Values shifted to more involved parenting
- Cell phones/technology allow for constant parent/child contact (56% have daily contact)
- Children stay on insurance through 26
- Can encourage freedom/flexibility OR foster dependency and inability to move forward

Key Developmental Milestones

- Independence
- Identity
- Responsibility
- Socialization





Balancing on
developmental
milestones:

The mind and
emotions of
college students

Happiness

Excitement

Hope

Resentment

Uncertainty

Anger

Range of Emotions

Apprehension

Sadness

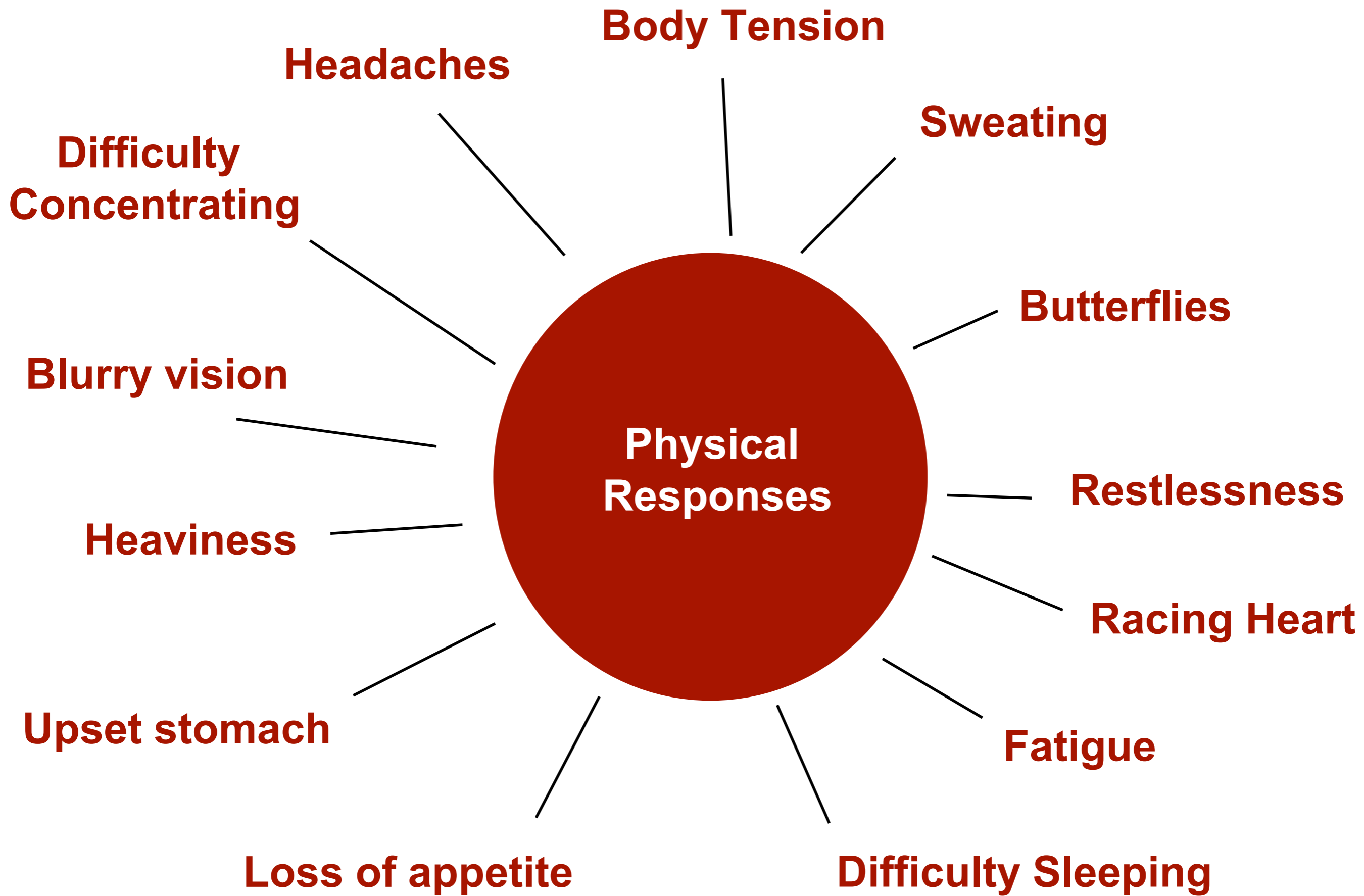
Anxiety

Grief

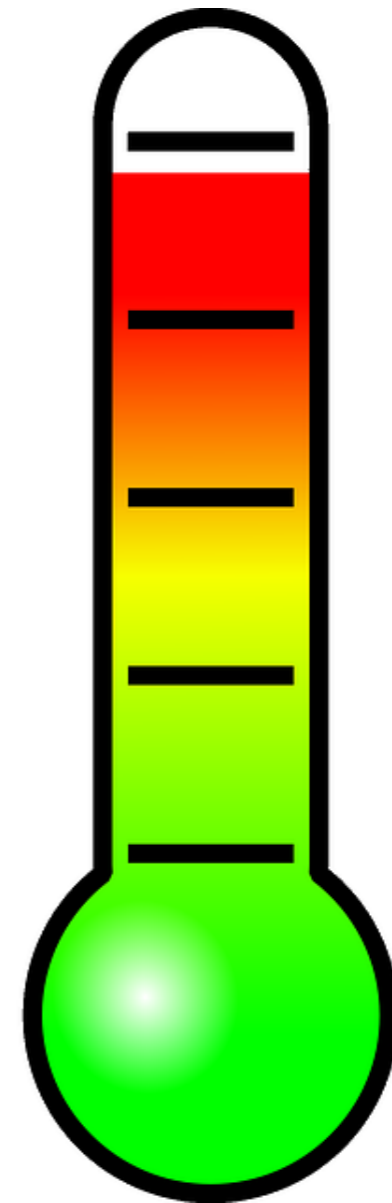
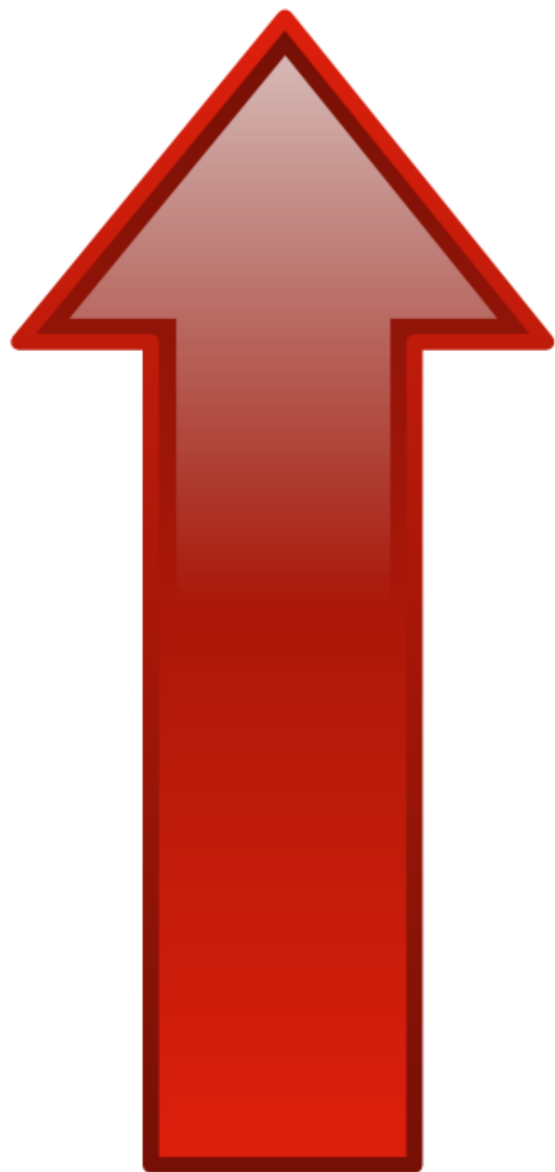
Stress

Fear

Worry



Higher Baseline Stress



**Be on the
lookout for:**

**An increase in
potentially harmful
coping strategies**

- Substance use
- Risky sexual behavior
- Avoidance

**Inconsistent self-
care routines**

Looking out for Vulnerable Students

- Students at higher risk:
 - Students with pre-existing mental health, medical, or learning difficulties
 - Students of Color
 - LGBTQ
 - First generation, immigrant, and Native American
 - International Students



Treatment Options for Anxiety and Mood Symptoms

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

12-20 weeks

Interpersonal Therapy

20 weeks

Medication

Facilitating Treatment

- Offering evidence-based treatment through college counseling centers – brief or full versions
- Creating CBT or IPT groups
- Establish online referral database
- Coordinate with local providers to provide students with treatment options

Questions to ask when creating a care plan

- How do we maintain the care and services we already provide?
- How do we proactively help students cope with changes to campus life (athletics, clubs, socialization)?
- How can we support students with pre-existing mental health difficulties that are likely to be struggling right now?
- Is there anything we can do to engage high-risk students to utilize our resources?
- What ability do we have to increase access to evidence-based treatment on campus?
- How can we facilitate referrals to services we cannot provide ourselves?



Assessment Measures

Screening for Anxiety and Depression

- Brief screening tools (PHQ-9, GAD-7)
- Implement regular screening for anxiety and depression
- Columbia Suicide Screening tool (C-SSRS Screener)
- Using Technology for Screening Tools
- Integrating stress and wellness assessment into orientation
- Set up a triage and response plan for increased rate of positive screens



Short-term, Crisis Based Help

- Psychological First Aid is a flexible, modular evidence-based response to acute stress that focuses on adaptive coping and providing psychological and logistical support
- Use of PFA to provide short-term access to a high number of students/faculty/staff in an efficient way
- Training Reslife/Student Counseling Services/Student leaders interested in helping
- Triage those in need and refer for ongoing help

Eight Core Actions of PFA



Contact and Engagement



Safety and Comfort



Stabilization (if needed)



Information Gathering on Current Needs/Concerns



Practical Assistance



Connection with Social Supports



Information on Coping



Connection with Collaborative Services

Strategies to Promote Student Wellness

- Virtual “toolkits” for coping
 - Mindfulness
 - Physical activity
 - Social connection
 - Access to academic supports
 - Feeling of connectedness to the campus culture

Developmental Tasks of Emerging Adulthood in the era of COVID-19

Changing landscape of Young Adulthood

Young adults living at home and changes in the nature of family relationships/interactions

Restricted independence, freedom, and socialization

Demand to adapt to virtual learning and other academic changes

Anxiety about the world they will enter upon graduation

Young Adult Developmental Milestones

- Emotional Independence
- Complete Educational Requirements
- Short & Long Term Vocational Goals
- Cultivate Long Term Relationships
- Romantic Relationships
- Live Independently
- Financial Independence
- Personal Self-Care
 - sleep, health care, exercise, diet, self-soothing
- Behavioral Independence
 - assertiveness, initiative, task completion
- Nearly All impacted by COVID-19
 - Remote Learning
 - Fewer internship or job options
 - Social Distancing
 - Socializing and Dating online/zoom
 - Many young adults at parents' home
 - Economic impact
 - Need to create new routines, schedules and healthy habits
 - Lack of structure, and/or increased avoidance and/or over reliance on parents may impact independence



Problem solving skills

Social skills

Emotion regulation skills

Realistic thinking

Perspective taking

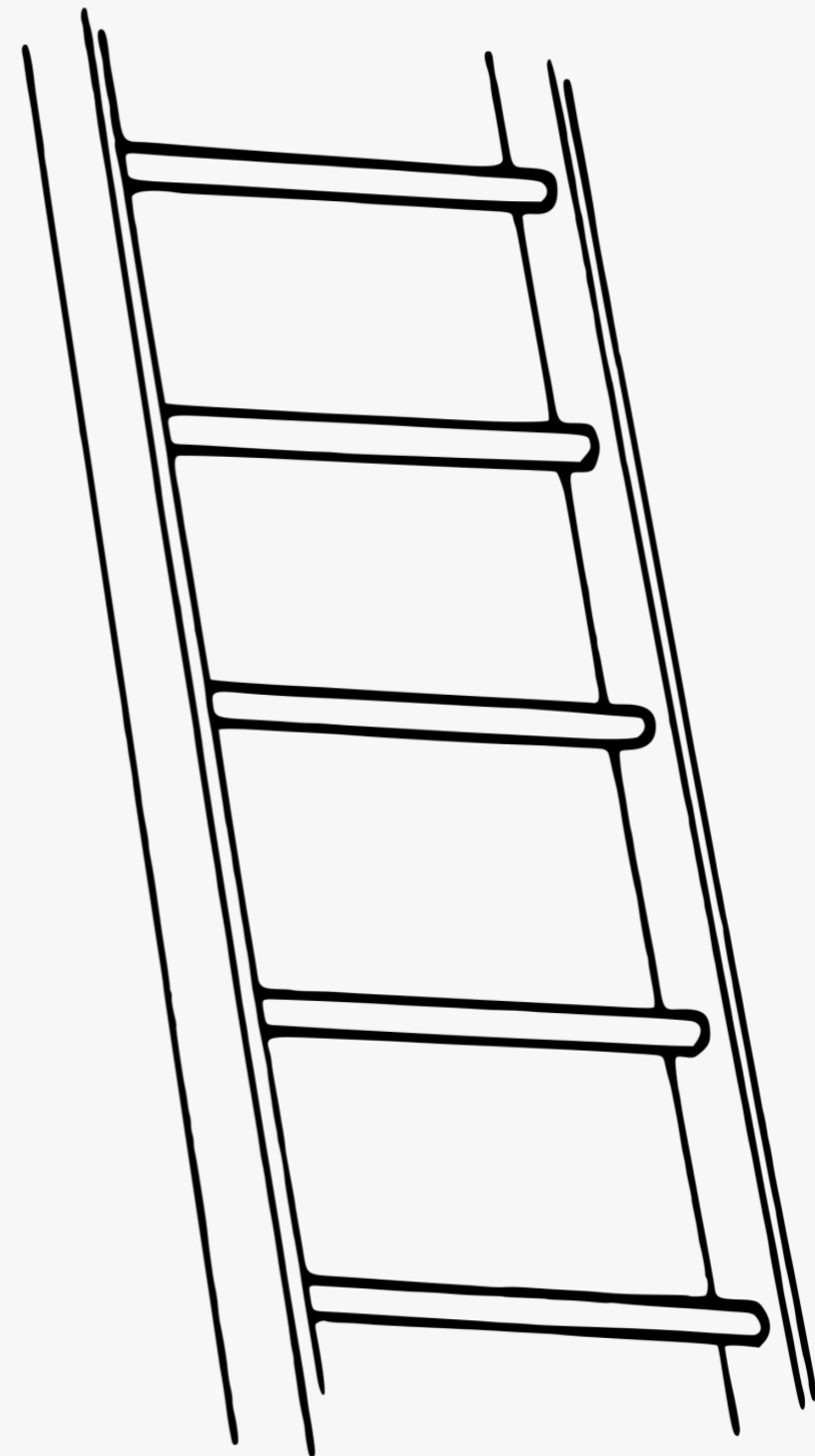
Anxiety and stress/time management skills

Flexibility to learn from their mistakes

Support but not overprotection

Scalable Delivery of Evidence Based Coping Skills

- Triage to “levels of care” based on assessment tools
- Utilizing scalable available technologies
 - (CBT apps, mindfulness)
- Virtual group based interventions
 - Bringing students together for skills and support
- Training Skills “Coaches”
- Most at risk students receive full-scale treatments



1. Assess baseline stress levels and independent functioning
2. Psychoeducation about stress and everyday life
3. Discussion of the college orientation process
4. Socio-emotional skill building
5. Academic and self-care skills
6. Anxiety exposure/independence practice
7. Discussion of seeking help
8. Review and planning ahead

Questions?

Thank You!

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