

## How to Advocate for...*Self-care in the midst of a crisis*

**Catherine Ivey, B.S. and Catalina Uribe, M.S., Graduate Students**

*Nova Southeastern University*

**What are some things you wish you would have known about advocating for self-care in the midst of a crisis in graduate school?**

**Catalina:** It's much easier said than done. I want to help others, and through our *Feel Good Flyer* (posted in the graduate student community) we're both trying to simplify self-care so that it's not overwhelming and so it doesn't feel like just another task on their to-do list, but not everyone actually takes our help. It's frustrating to want to help others feel better, but not necessarily reach the maximum amount of people. Another difficult part is taking into consideration that not everyone is experiencing a "privileged self-isolation" with continuing income, supportive relationships, etc. and finding ways to spread our message and support in ways accessible to them.

**Catherine:** In order to be helpful to students, I think it's important to be in tune to what our students needs are. Everyone copes differently and I've learned that sometimes the idea of self-care can be seen as a task to people. It's important to present information in a way that is beneficial. We've had the opportunity to learn a lot about the personal coping strategies of students through our feedback survey and our own research, which has been helpful.

**How has your self-care in the midst of a crisis routine changed from your typical self-care routine?**

**Catalina:** It involves a lot more time outdoors! My screen-time feels like it has tripled during this crisis, so for me, taking a walk, doing exercise outdoors, or even just working from my backyard has become an integral part of my mental self-care.

**Catherine:** Being a graduate student at home, it is an easy thing to sit at a desk and do work for 10+ hours straight. However, through this research, I have become more aware of my needs and the cognitive and physical benefits of listening to my brain and body. For example, when I first

started school, I used to power through my work before taking a break because I saw breaks as a “reward” for finishing my work. I think it’s an easy thing to believe this, but in graduate school, when the demands get harder and assignments get longer, this prospective no longer works. We begin using our weekends as breaks and weeks to binge on work. However, when we realize that it’s actually ok to let ourselves refuel once or twice a day, it can truly change the way we view our work and our level of productivity.

### **How have you connected with others during social distancing?**

**Catalina:** Zoom has been quite the popular method for most these days. I’ve had several calls with my extended family which has been great! Now that we’re all at home most, if not all day it’s much easier to schedule a time that works for everyone to catch up.

**Catherine:** I have loved exploring platforms of social media for people to use through this project. My friends and I don’t just text now, but we utilize the Zoom, House Party, and Snapchat Apps. It’s made me expand my idea on how to connect with my friends and become creative on how to do so in the process. For example, my friends and I have hosted painting parties on Zoom and played virtual card games over the House Party App!

### **What is the main thing you want readers to know about when advocating for self-care *in the midst of a crisis*?**

**Catalina and Catherine:** Self-care doesn’t have to be a daunting task, nor does it have to look like what is often advertised (face masks, bubble baths, etc.) Rather, it’s anything - even NOTHING! As long as it helps you relax and refuel in the moment so you to balance other aspects of your life better.