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THE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL
THE GRADUATE MENTORING CENTER
Indiana University Bloomington

The GMC Newsletter

October 30, 2020

*Mentoring in These Times: The 2020 Election
For Graduate Students, Faculty, and Staff*

Dear Graduate Mentoring Center Community,

How are you? Your families? Your communities? Your research and teaching? Your peace? Your breath. Your breathing? [How are you breathing?](#)

I ask you these questions as a colleague, peer, community member, mentor; a friend; a human being living through and in these times with you. This week coming, we will each re/experience stress and a range of emotions. What we are feeling or experiencing will be visible and invisible; never disappeared and is resurfacing; can't be articulated through words and can be articulated through poetry or movement. And, yes, there will be moments when we feel - dare I say - free. If you need assistance to work it through and work it out, I encourage you to access campus resources for help. Also, in response to two of the most frequently asked questions we have received in the past few weeks, we offer you some guidelines below. You can find information about campus resources and additional resources/guides [here](#).

What do I say? How do I say it? If you are in a mentoring relationship, you may be concerned about what to do this week and subsequent ones. You may even want to avoid issues that arise. What if your mentor or mentee wants to talk about everything? What if you don't want to talk about anything?

- **Remember:** Right now, many people (perhaps even you) are at the edges of everything. You may be suffering from [burnout](#), [compassion fatigue](#), [racial trauma](#), other traumas, confusion, and plain old tiredness. Whatever the case, you may be feeling overextended,

overwhelmed, underserved, and misunderstood. Be honest with yourself about what's going on to avoid harming yourself and others.

- **Acknowledge.** If invited to or reluctantly drawn into dialogue about current events, sometimes simply acknowledging what is happening around you, for you, and for others is enough.
- **Be Realistic.** If you are unable to engage in dialogue, acknowledge what has been shared and what is happening, and add that you do not feel able to engage in dialogue at the moment and why, if you are able to speak about it. Honesty is always appreciated, particularly in our mentoring relationships.
- **Reiterate.** Repeat your acknowledgement of what has been said or what you are witnessing. Ask if you could share some resources that might help. Have a list of resources available.
- **Respond.** If you are able to/want to mutually engage in dialogue with someone, again acknowledge what is being shared. Respond by asking: What do you need at this moment? What might help you most at this moment? Sometimes, listening is enough. Sometimes, silence is enough. Sometimes more is needed. It is important to know "what is the what" before responding.
- **Recognize.** Everyone wants to know that they are seen and heard. Being in a relationship is not about getting your point across. It is about recognizing our being with each other as we move towards the next steps of re/building community. It is making space for empathy.
- **Reach Out.** Identify members of your community who can support you. If you are feeling that you are without community, we are here: iugmc@indiana.edu.
- **Retreat/Rest.** Spend some quiet moments with yourself to know who, what, and where are best for you right now. Disconnect for a bit from social media. Remember to breathe.
- **Return.** When ready, join the conversations and the community building.

Maria Hamilton Abegunde, Ph.D.

Director

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