DEALING WITH ELECTION STRESS

UNPLUG

Limit your consumption of media, particularly of the 24-hour news cycle of social media variety. Stay informed, but instead of constantly scrolling your newsfeed, try one of the other options listed here instead.

SEARCH FOR THE NUGGET OF TRUTH

Breathe deeply and see if you can get curious about the experience of others who hold different opinions than you. What in their life may have made them believe the things they believe? Remember we are all humans just trying to be happy. You might practice saying to yourself, “This person, just like me, has experienced pain, suffering, sadness. This person just like me has experienced loss, grief. This person, just like me wants to be happy.”

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE

Only when we can fully acknowledge what is here can we begin to make change. If you hear yourself saying things should be other than they are, you aren’t accepting reality. We may not like it, but it is reality. Once you can say, “This is how it is,” then you can get down to the work of trying to make things different. Mothers Against Drunk Driving is a good example of someone who radically accepted life and made a change.

ACKNOWLEDGE FEELINGS

Although distraction and compartmentalizing can be useful, unaddressed intense emotion can also have negative impacts. Also, reactions to events vary from person to person. Some experience intense feelings while others experience nothing at all. Allow yourself to feel what you feel and don’t judge your personal experience or the experience of others. Journal your thoughts or share with an understanding friend.

CONNECT WITH BOUNDARIES

Engage with supportive friends and allies. Talk about it if you need to, but also communicate your boundaries when needed. Not everyone will share your perspective. Avoid or limit conversations that have the potential to get heated. Try a phrase like, “I respect your perspective, and it’s probably best if we don’t continue this conversation.”

OPPOSITE ACTION

Do the opposite of your usual response to intense emotions. If you are angry with someone in your home, rather than lash out, do the opposite — take a brief vacation from them, if you can. Rather than isolating when you feel down, do the opposite — connect with people. If you feel shame and it fits the facts, face the music. Apologize and repair the harm if you can.

DO SOMETHING FOR SOMEONE ELSE

Get out of your own head, and use the energy you may be feeling to help someone else. It doesn’t have to be something big. Just asking someone if you can pick up something at the grocery for them or just smile at the cashier when you check out.

WFSM Counseling & Well-Being Services. Connect with us at counselingservices@wakehealth.edu

Adapted from www.csulb.edu/CAPS; Substance Abuse Mental Health Association, and Virginia Commonwealth University.