

# Experiencing intense emotions about the conflict?

## Emotions

experience  
catastrophising  
dysfunction  
sadness  
distress  
stress  
anger  
lived  
ruminating  
sleep  
anxiety  
obsessing  
disruption  
helpless  
unease  
depression

"There's change happening in our lives and a lot of it is involuntary. When people experience involuntary change, it feels like they're out of control."

*Laura S. Brown,  
PhD, clinical psychologist  
& trauma expert*

"Clearly, what we're experiencing right now is unprecedented - all this happening at once - prolonged pandemic, the political turmoil, the war, climate change."  
*Michael Ziffra, MD, associate professor of psychiatry & behavioral sciences at Northwestern University* When there are multiple stressors we have more intense emotions.

"It turns out that we don't really have brand new grief and sadness over tragedies that happen in our world and in our lives. We all live with a well of grief to which every tragedy and loss we have experienced contributes. Whenever we feel grief from any new tragedy, we are also visiting all of the old grief from the past." *Rev. Kevin Massey, Vice President of Mission*

Being uncertain causes strong negative reactions as we search and we wildly grasp for certainty and a way through. When we are uncertain we can: seek excessive reassurance, become demanding and blinkered in moving forward, forget to listen to others, alienate others, catastrophize, scaremonger, or maybe we procrastinate and avoid. We channel our strong emotions into strong actions. This is normal survival responses.  
*Allard Student Wellbeing*

Some of many – everyone's experience is different - but emotions will be high and intense

# things you can do to help manage the distress associated with the conflict

**BEHAVIOUR** - focus on anchors and routines staying connected to activities and practices that help enhance well-being:

- get moving and do something that feels good for your body and helps you get out of your head - go for a walk, dance, clean, yoga, exercise, take a nap
- eat something you enjoy
- listen to music that enlivens or calms you
- rest

## CONTROL

these events are largely outside of our personal control or impact – look to what you can control

## MEDIA

- limit media exposure
- rely on trusted news sources
- focus on facts rather than alarmist speculation
- limit engagement with graphic visual content (which research has linked to psychological reactivity and mental health)

## EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- proactive check in every day
- breathe
- use distraction as a coping skill, eg:
  - academic work can be used as a distraction
  - count backwards from 300 by twos.
  - focus your mind on a task that is pleasant for you.
  - challenge your mind with a game that requires attention e.g., crossword puzzle or sudoku.
  - be mindful of the present in a mini mindful moment: in the moment I can see, hear, taste, touch, smell
  - do jumping jacks, sit ups, or a plank.
  - spend 15 mins reading or rereading a book (for pleasure)
  - watch one episode of a TV show.
  - put on some music and sing out loud and dance.
- The Butterfly hug: <https://www.facebook.com/allardlawstudentservices/photos/2921955094547674>
- Stepping: <https://www.facebook.com/allardlawstudentservices/photos/2924304580979392>

**EMOTIONAL PROCESSING** - avoiding holding in your emotions, instead actively process them:

- journaling/drawing or writing a letter (DO NOT POST the letter – this is a therapeutic task only):
  - do not worry about grammar or chronology, but in a stream of consciousness write out how you feel (not think). Follow the emotional threads, as one memory triggers another.
  - as you write/draw, let the emotions surface, and release them from your body, in any appropriate way, e.g., cry, deep sigh breath, punch a pillow, tense your muscles and release, shake it out from your body
- exercise – use the emotional energy to power your workout.
- PMR – use the emotional energy to tighten the muscles in your body and then release by relaxing the muscles shake out your fingers, jump up and down, shake your body like a dog.
- breathe it out vocally giving your emotions a voice.
- imagine the emotion as something and change it into something else, eg., anger as ice that you watch drip away until it's all melted.
- cry
- after you finish any of these activities don't forget to ground yourself (regulate) so that any residue emotions do not stay with you throughout the day.

## SOCIAL

- call, text, or email someone you love
- seek social support

## THOUGHTS

- open yourself up to sitting in uncertainty
- take it easy on yourself and on each other
- remember your purpose and find ways to continue that purpose.
- remind yourself of times you coped in the past. Use those copings now

## ACTION

- Is there any action you can do?
  - Support the people of Ukraine/local Ukrainian community?
  - Donate?

“Limiting the amount and kinds of media content you access can help protect against the psychological costs of media exposure. Decide how often you will check the news and what types of media you will engage with.” *Roxane Cohen Silver, PhD, a professor of psychology, University of California, Irvine.*

“Look around your life. Where do you have control or choice, even in the smallest way? Exercise that.” *Laura S. Brown, PhD, clinical psychologist and trauma expert, Seattle*

“Talking with other people helps us acknowledge our feelings and validate them”  
*Dr. Miller*

“Even though everyone's experience is unique to themselves, when we share our own experience with others, we learn that there are also similarities in how we all manifest grief, stress and fear. That helps us feel less alone.” *Rev. Massey*

## If you need assistance:

- Anna Kline, **Allard Law Student Wellbeing** 604.822.4928  
<http://www.allard.ubc.ca/student-resources/student-wellbeing>
- **UBC Student Assistance Program (SAP)** 1.833.590.1328 (In Nth America) 1.604.757.9734 (Outside Nth America)  
24/7 UBC student community counselling service providing immediate and short-term counselling  
<https://students.ubc.ca/health/ubc-student-assistance-program-sap>