



TOGETHER WE **RISE**. TOGETHER WE **THRIVE**.
Navigating High School in a New Era — From Students, For Students



 **CPRL** | Center for Public Research and Leadership

 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK



MINDS MATTER
NEW YORK CITY

Student Voice

TOGETHER WE **RISE**. TOGETHER WE **THRIVE**.
FROM STUDENTS / FOR STUDENTS

COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION

Community and connection is more important now than ever before. While you may not be able to physically see friends as often, there are countless ways to build and maintain relationships during this time. Create a community of people who you can turn to for both fun and support.

“

My communities have gotten me through. Find a community that you love or are passionate about or want to join. With virtual life, it's important to have community other than your family.

- 11th Grader, New York

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COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION

HOW TO BUILD COMMUNITY

How do I find a community?

Don't assume your community must be in your neighborhood. With the majority of events taking place virtually, you can join an interest-based organization in your community or in another state. Set up virtual coffee dates to get to know other members.

How can I strengthen my relationships?

Virtual Meetups



Visit Pogo to plan free virtual game nights.



Workout with friends using free YouTube videos, or set up a virtual book club on a topic you can't wait to dive into.

How can we support each other?

Let your friends know that they can reach out when they need to talk (and don't be afraid to lean on friends when you need a bit of additional support yourself).



In-person Meetups (as is safe!)

Find ways to get fresh air with friends before or after the school day. If you are tired of socially-distanced walks, plan a BYO picnic or take a tour at a local museum or cultural site (pro tip: many of these organizations offer reduced prices for students!).

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COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION

COMMUNITY SERVICE

How do I find a project worth my time?



Visit [DoSomething.org](https://dosomething.org) to find a cause you're passionate about.

Participating in community service allows you to both give back and widen your social circle by meeting new people with similar interests and values.

What are some ways to give back virtually?



Tutor or read to younger children (virtually or in person).



Let your voice be heard. Write a letter to your senator about an issue you care about.



Can't donate to a cause? Like posts on social media and share them on your story to spread awareness.



Find games like Freerice that allow you to have fun while giving back. For every answer you get right, the organization provides 10 grains of rice through the World Food Programme.

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MOTIVATION AND SELF-CARE

Finding ways to stay motivated and taking care of yourself can help you feel confident and determined even during hard and uncertain times. Use these tips and strategies to build motivation and take care of yourself.

“

Finding a longer-term goal gives me a positive outlook. I have to remind myself that the future still exists beyond this.

- 11th Grader, South Carolina

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MOTIVATION AND SELF-CARE

BUILDING MOTIVATION

It can be so hard to stay motivated with all the uncertainty of this past year. Reconnect with your long-term goals and purpose to stay on track.



Most importantly, your vision board should make you **HAPPY!**



Create a vision board (or many!) that illustrates your goals, your purpose, and the impact you hope to have.

What is a vision board?

A vision board can be a poster board or digital blank space with a collage of images and words. It should reflect big goals and priorities across **different areas of your life.**

How do I keep myself motivated?

Keep a journal to reflect on and track your goals. Start by writing one or two dreams down, then imagine the steps it would take to get there.

Watch motivational videos of people who inspire you. Keep a Youtube playlist of those videos so that you can watch one when you need it.



Write down inspirational quotes. Post them somewhere visible (above a desk, by your bedside, on a mirror).

Pick one or two events to look forward to (whether it's something big like starting college or something small like attending a virtual get-together). Write the event on a sticky note somewhere you can see it.

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MOTIVATION AND SELF-CARE

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

It's impossible to do your best in school or help family and friends if you don't take care of yourself. Prioritize your mental health and wellbeing so you are reenergized for your responsibilities and relationships.

I'm feeling burnt out. How do I start taking care of myself?



Dedicate a notebook to journaling every day. Even if you just write one sentence per day, note how you're feeling, what is bothering you, and how the day went. After a week or month, identify trends and start to address them.



Take time to rest and rejuvenate. You deserve down time!

Where can I find some resources to help?

There are many free and low-cost apps on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store designed to help you take care of yourself!



Stop. Breathe. Think.



Headspace: Meditation and Sleep



Sayana: Daily Self-Care



Daylio Journal



I Am: Positive Affirmations



Mindshift



Be intentional about screen time.

When you do spend time online, curate your feed so that you consume motivational media. Follow accounts that build you up, rather than bring you down. Watch videos with self-care tips. ([Here is one to get you started!](#))

Incorporate movement into your daily routine. Watch exercise videos, take dance breaks, go on long walks outside. Learn a Tik Tok dance and send it to your friends (or keep it for yourself!).



Give yourself grace. On the hard days, breathe. On good days, celebrate. You're doing great!



Reward yourself after meeting a goal. Make cupcakes or watch a movie.

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PERSONAL ROUTINES

Finding ways to stay organized will allow you to manage your time and balance your school and home responsibilities.

“

I'm using the Pomodoro Timer (25 mins on, 5 mins off). I see the timer ticking down, and it helps me stay focused.

- 11th Grader, New Jersey

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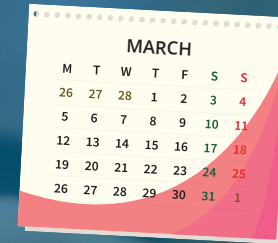
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PERSONAL ROUTINES

RESPONSIBILITIES



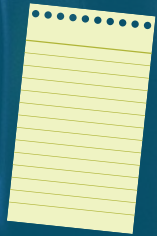
How do I keep track of and manage my responsibilities?



Have a calendar near your workspace, and use your phone calendar for class and meeting reminders.



Create a to-do list using sticky notes or free apps such as To-Doist, Notion, Google Jamboard, or Trello.



Use a notebook or the Notes App on your phone to jot down deadlines and recap your day.



Share your deadlines with family and friends who can hold you accountable.



Block time in your schedule for each activity.



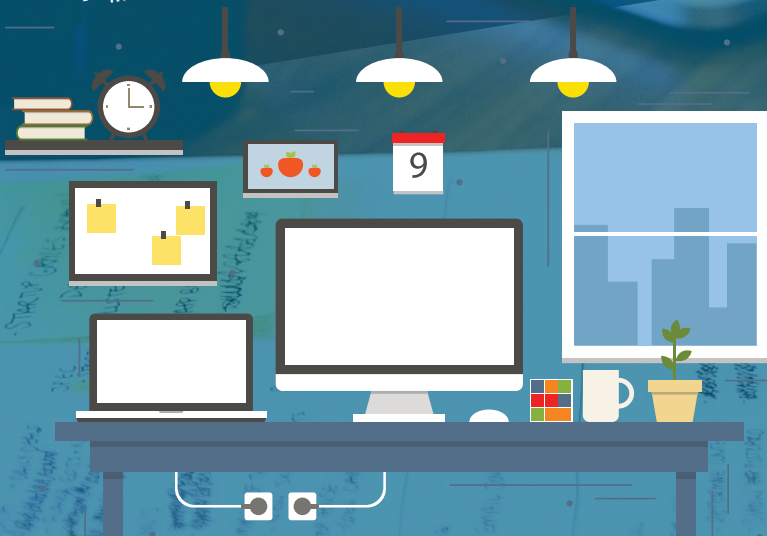
Schedule challenging subjects at times when you're most alert.

PERSONAL ROUTINES

ORGANIZATION AND FOCUS

How do I set up a space that works for me?

- Find a space that is comfortable and works for you. Your ideal space may be different than your friends'—some people like to work at a table and silence while others prefer to change spots throughout the day and listen to soft music.
- Pick a space with relatively few distractions.
- Make sure your space has what you need for school.



What do I do when I can't concentrate on work?

- Take breaks when you feel unproductive. Time away can help you refocus.
- Minimize distractions. Turn off the TV or set your phone in another room when working on difficult tasks.
- Use rewards to motivate yourself to finish a challenging task.



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ACADEMIC SUCCESS

While this year has been challenging to connect with classmates and teachers, you can still get academic support from your school to ensure that you finish the year off strong!

“

I rely more on my friends and my classmates. It's better to struggle together rather alone. We try to tutor each other in a group and just be there for each other. It's okay to depend on each other.

- 12th Grader, New York

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ACADEMIC SUCCESS

COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT

How do I work with classmates?



Organize group study sessions on Zoom.



Create group chats to communicate with classmates and ask each other for help.



Make studying more engaging by using Kahoot or Quizlet to quiz each other.

How can I get academic support?

Go to office hours. Ask friends to join if that makes you more comfortable. If it's hard to get in touch with a teacher, reach out to another school staff member whom you trust.



Get to know your teachers. Just like you, they are also trying to balance work and home life.



Look for online learning communities based on your interests. Watch free online videos on HippoCampus or Khan Academy.



Find a free tutor online. Reach out to your local library to connect with free tutoring.

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ACADEMIC SUCCESS

NEXT STEPS

How do I prepare myself for next steps after high school?

Find internship and volunteer opportunities outside of school. Now that everything is remote, seek out internships that you otherwise might not—for example, by looking for opportunities in other states.



Join virtual clubs or sports that you're passionate about. Ask your school to see what is available.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the dozens of high school students across the country for sharing your wisdom and ideas to help fellow high schoolers stay motivated during this time. Your insights were incredibly valuable in creating this tool.