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**A message from the counselor for international students No.15**

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**The loss of normal daily life — The fight against an invisible enemy**

Though the cherry blossoms were blooming on the campus as usual, there were no students there. The entrance ceremony was cancelled and we cannot hold face to face classes in the spring semester. We are worried if you might feel insecure, especially for newcomers, you might experience no sense of belonging. Now, we cannot maintain our normal daily lives due to the spread of the COVID-19. We can say everybody in the world is experiencing the loss of normal daily life. The sense of loss affects us physically and mentally. Some people might experience headaches, muscle aches, stomachaches and insomnia. Others might feel sadness and sudden tearful outbursts, uncontrollable rage, dullness, inability to study, loss of concentration. These various reactions are the natural processes of the body and mind when coming to terms with the unacceptable situations.

Coronavirus is invisible. Invisibility makes us anxious. We have the fear of contagion. On the other hand, there are some who try to get a sense of safety by declaring, "I'll never be infected the virus." Both are the natural reactions when we experience a pandemic.

You might have worries about the future. Can I catch up with the remote classes? Can I get a job after graduation? Can I finish my graduation thesis? Or can I pay the tuition without doing a part-time job?

**How can we cope with the fear and anxiety?**

- It's perfectly **normal to feel fear and anxiety**. Be aware that you are experiencing fear and anxiety.
- Having **accurate information** which makes you safe and secure and confirms which behaviors and actions you can perform. If you have worries and concerns about your academic and financial matters, please inquire to each department desk or each program desk by email. **Getting support** is nothing to feel embarrassed or ashamed about.
- Do not try to bottle up your anxiety inside yourself. **Express your anxiety**. Stay with someone who you feel trust makes you secure. Chatting online will be helpful. Remember, when we cannot handle our anxiety, we tend to express it in a violent behavior or language toward those who are weaker than us.
- How to cope with the anxiety—I'll introduce you to **The Breathing Relaxation** and **The Butterfly Hug**.

### ◆Breathing Relaxation

- Sit upright in a comfortable and natural position. You can close your eyes or leave them open. Be aware of the soles of your feet and put your hands on your thighs or on your stomach.
- Inhale deeply, easily, and comfortably into your abdomen.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose and out from your mouth.
- Again, breathe in and breathe out slowly.
- You can breathe in naturally after breathing out.
- Again, breathe in and out deeply, easily, and comfortably.
- While you're breathing out, releasing the tension from your whole body, release the tension from your face, arms, shoulders and feet.
- Continue at your own pace for a while.
- Lastly, stretch your whole body

### ◆The Butterfly Hug

#### • When you have anxiety

When you feel anxious, hug a pillow or a cushion. With your right hand, pat your upper left arm, and with your left hand, pat your upper right arm. It will lead to a more psychologically stable state of mind. At this point, you might feel like you want to cry. If so, let it all out.

#### • To create a sense of security

To create a safe and secure place in your mind, you can utilize the image of the place where you have visited in the past or you can create an original place. For example, in a forest where you feel sunlight shining or on the beach where you hear the rippling of the waves. Do the Butterfly Hug while imaging a safe place in your mind, you can get a sense of security.

- ◆The picture book treating the coronavirus. “The Story of the Oyster and the Butterfly” Available in multiple languages and free to download.⇒<https://www.anagomez.org/>  
Ana Gomez-sensei, a specialist in treating trauma, has created this picture book. We've got a message from her to spread this book.

This time can be an opportunity to do some of those things you never usually have time for.

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\*Previous messages are available on the ISC's website.