

Campus Announcement

August 31, 2021

Office of the Ombuds: You and Your Well-Being Are Important

Dear Faculty and Staff,

As we begin the fall semester, we realize the impact of Covid-19 and its evolving variants have taken a toll on faculty, staff, and students. Many of us were infected and continue to experience the side effects of fatigue, mental strain, weight loss, and strange food smells and tastes. Some of us still care for family members who have been infected or are at risk. Some of us tragically lost loved ones to the virus. Many of us experienced the challenge of working from home when tumult was happening in our family lives right behind our computer screens. Our determination, resiliency, and connections have helped us meet the challenges head-on despite the strain.

We are now returning to the campus with masks on, a Delta variant on the rise, and worries about our immunocompromised family members and children and grandchildren who are not vaccinated. Each of us is trying to get back to a feeling of normalcy, but wherever we are right now, it surely isn't normal. Transitions are ahead. Our commuting, teaching on Zoom or in-person or both, managing the offices, taking care of the facilities, and keeping the building secure involves new questions of safety. Feelings of hope, thrill, excitement, anxiety, fear, frustration, and uncertainty are to be expected as we transition back to the College.

Your Well-Being

Baruch's Ombuds office strives to reduce conflict and improve communication. Please let us know how we can help manage this transition with less stress and greater ease. Email me, mindy.engle-friedman@baruch.cuny.edu, or glenda.hydlar@baruch.cuny.edu.

Here are some suggestions to help improve this transition.

- **We flourish when we are around friends.** Reconnect with friends and colleagues at the College and beyond. Sharing feelings about the transition, and what's happening during the semester, can create a greater sense of calm.
- Consider forming **virtual groups through apps** (e.g., Teams, Slack, or WhatsApp) with colleagues in and outside of your department for schmoozing, fun, and workplace tips.
- Try **meditation** exercises. Relaxing your body will help relax your mind. Websites such as [Calm](#) offer a selection of strategies. Find one that speaks to you.
- **Yoga** has been shown to reduce stress and trauma. No matter your age or physical condition, give it a try. Many websites offer free instruction. Here's one: [Yoga with Adriene](#).
- **Healthy eating, drinking fluids, and getting sufficient sleep** improve our well-being. Take breaks and short naps when you can.
- Close your eyes, take slow deep breaths, and relax behind your mask. This will help clear your mind and prepare you for teaching or communicating with others at the College.
- **Go outside**, breathe fresh air, look at the sky, check out the new plaza.
- Engage in something **fun** that is non-work or -school related during the day.
- **Share suggestions** about what works for you with others.
- **Take breaks from the news** when you can. World news can be overwhelming. Be mindful of your exposure to the news.
- **Thank staff** often—especially our colleagues in Public Safety and Buildings and Grounds for their frontline service throughout the pandemic and as we re-engage with campus life.
- **Give yourself credit** for all you are doing for yourself, your family, and Baruch.

Baruch and CUNY offer support resources. Explore them at the [Office of Human Resources](#) for faculty and staff, the [Counseling Center](#) for students, and at CUNY's [Kognito site](#), which helps us identify at-risk students.

Let Us Know How You Are Doing

We are in an emerging transition. Take a deep breath, capture the historical moment, stay connected, and let us know how you are doing. We are in this together. Our great mission is to learn, grow, and become great contributors to society.

With best wishes for an interesting and illuminating Fall 2021 semester,

Mindy Engle-Friedman

Associate Professor, Department of Psychology
Baruch College Ombuds

