



## Wofford coaches express gratitude, offer hope



## Terriers make a virtual surprise visit

**Click here** for a Herald-Journal story on Wofford men's basketball players surprising first graders during a Zoom call.

## A call for self-care and self-compassion



By Courtney Dorroll, assistant professor of religion

If you've ever taken a yoga class, you might remember that instructors end classes with a final relaxation pose. You are asked to lie on your back with your arms stretched and placed a bit out from your sides. Your legs are apart, and your eyes are closed. The instructor subtly reminds you to relax and that the work for the class is done. You have reached the time in class to completely rejuvenate yourself.

This has always been my favorite part of yoga classes, which are my preferred way to care for myself. I usually do this at the Spartanburg YMCA, but now I am doing it in my living room with a yoga YouTuber while my toddler naps in the next room.

Reminding myself and my students about the importance of self-care is where I find myself while teaching amidst a pandemic. I traditionally teach classes on the Middle East and the ethnographic method, but this semester I want my students to remember the value of self-care. Therefore, my course is no longer solely focused on the traditional work we originally planned. Yes, we will still do some items left on the syllabus, and I hope those tasks will be a moment to escape the anxiety of the pandemic and not cause undue stress to my students. Yet at the core of the class now is adding in the practice of self-care and self-compassion.

In the last two years, I have experimented with adding self-care into my classroom - usually a day or two each semester where I ask students to use time they would have spent in class to care for themselves - in whatever way or form that they need. We also do a few readings on self-care. Usually at the heart of the discussion is how self-care is going against the go, go, go narrative of a very driven and busy American society. Now, that entire narrative has been turned on its head.

To fight this virus, we are told that doing less is doing more. We have been asked to reconstruct how we care for others - to not be with them but instead to distance ourselves from them and shelter in. We have stopped what we were planning to do, and we wait. But sheltering in, just like self-care, is embedded with privilege. For example, some of us are still working long hours while also taking care of, or homeschooling, children, and our workload has increased exponentially. Others are working in essential services patrolling the streets, caring for sick patients, stocking grocery store shelves or in labs hurriedly seeking a vaccine for this virus. Some of us have houses and yards to shelter in for comfort, while others are cramped in small spaces with those who we didn't necessarily plan to be living with. All this to say, though we now have the "time" for self-care, it can still be difficult to achieve, and it can be a challenge to carve out time for ourselves even if sometimes it feels like all we have some days is time. Now more than ever I am reminded of the quote from Audre Lorde, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare."

We all deserve to self-care.

I'm reminding my students that it is OK to not be as productive as we initially planned. It is hard to concentrate, and life has become ever more complicated. It might take more effort, but caring for ourselves is a way to sustain ourselves right now.

In my classes the most important assignment I can give my students right now is to practice the ritual of self-care. Self-care can take many forms in this new normal we all find ourselves in. It might be a nap during a quiet period in your home, a soothing cup of herbal tea while enjoying your favorite fun TV show, podcast or movie or taking a walk out in a secluded part of nature. Self-care might be Zooming a friend and talking about how your day or week has gone. Self-care might be writing in your journal about the surrealness of our new reality. All these little things that seem pointless have a point: They are about getting yourself in a relaxed position and honoring the work you have done.

We have entered the time of Savasana. Please be kind to yourselves right now, know that being productive can mean something very different in a crisis and allow your pre-COVID-19 expectations for yourself to lower without feeling guilt. Right now, we all deserve self-compassion.



## **Alianza Spartanburg responds to challenges for immigrants during the pandemic**

On Friday, April 10, Alianza Spartanburg hosted a virtual roundtable with advocates statewide who are working to ensure access to information, health services and aid for Spanish-speaking and immigrant residents during the pandemic. Alianza Spartanburg (formerly known as Hispanic Alliance Spartanburg) is a social impact network that works to facilitate, encourage and promote the inclusion of members of the Latinx community in improving quality of life in Spartanburg County. It was founded eight years ago by Dr. Laura Barbas Rhoden, professor of Spanish. "Alianza Spartanburg has met every month since our founding in 2012, with the exception of March 2020 - it took a pandemic to keep us from coming together!" says Barbas Rhoden. "Since we knew our April meeting would be virtual, steering team member Araceli Hernandez-Laroche (USC Upstate) had the idea to feature fellow leaders across the state working to address challenges during the pandemic. Natalia Valenzuela Swanson (Mary Black Foundation) provided expert facilitation so the session would run smoothly, and I helped manage the logistics of Zoom. It was a beautiful team effort." The meeting had over 40 participants and helped shape the way Spartanburg area organizations respond to the challenges immigrant families face in the pandemic.

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