

Guiding Principles for Woods Faculty as We (Temporarily) Venture down the Path of Distance Learning

1. Take care of yourself.

You can't help and serve others if you're not looking after yourself in a real, concerted, deliberate way.

- Ruthlessly guard your **sleep**. Most people need more than they currently get to be their best selves. There are several prominent books on sleep that have come out in the past five years, and they all echo the same points.

Sleep hygiene:

Sleep in a dark, cool (<68°F) room.

Don't look at screens several hours before bed.

Avoid caffeine after noon.

Don't eat a lot, or drink alcohol, close to bedtime.

Try to keep bedtime and wake-up time consistent.

- **Move** and **exercise** in whatever form works for you.
- **Get outside**.
- **Connect** with your **Community/Tribe**.
- If you're a praying and/or meditating person, **pray and/or meditate**.
- If you're a tea drinking person, have a **cup of tea** . . . preferably with a loved one.

All of these things tend to bolster spirits -- and immune systems.

2. Rather than the perfect plan, seek the one that is “directionally correct.” Then, revise, evolve.

Don't let perfect be the enemy of good.

We're all facing something we've never faced; it's natural that we're going to make some pretty good decisions, and along the way, of course, some pretty bad ones. Let's commit to learning-as-we-go, rather than perfection.

3. Less is more.

Many/most of our students are pretty stressed. Our job is to keep their learning alive and keep them challenged, but we don't need to stress them out any more than they are. As we begin this venture, let's hold to “less is more” and then calibrate as we go. Let's look at our subjects and our skills and focus on the **marrow** of what we teach.

4. Don't pretend that distance learning is the same as what we normally do.

Yes, there are many amazingly cool tech tools at our disposal (and let's leverage them!), but we're a school that believes in face-to-face fully humanized learning in community. We can do a whole lot with distance learning, but most of us will be dissatisfied if we try to make our distance learning match our actual classroom experience.



5. Be gentle with each other.

Understandably, we're all on edge, and anxiety is up. When people are on edge, they take offense easily and snap at each other easily. Let's **assume good intentions** and **be extra kind and compassionate with each other**. Tough times can bring out the best and the worst in folks. Let's let this miserable pandemic summon the **better angels of our nature**. (We might need to directly, consciously wake up those better angels and invite them to the party!)

And remember the old teacher adage: the students are watching! The students will take cues from us adults. We can give them calm -- or we can give them something else. Let's give them as much calm as we can muster.

6. Let's see what we can learn.

None of us chose to have a global pandemic brought to us. And besides exercising basic hygiene measures and social distancing, we don't have control over when it concludes. We *can* control *how* we see it and *how* we frame it. As teachers and students and learners, let's use this frame: **I wonder what we can learn from this experience**. As Victor Frankl is often quoted as saying, that's the last of the human freedoms, to choose our response and our attitude to any given circumstance.

We're in this together. Let's learn from it together.

So, it's true that we don't *really* know where we're going. My hope is that, given this high degree of uncertainty, we can hold these principles close to heart and keep them close in mind as we navigate this path together.