











# ***Hope Is Virtual Office Hours***

**Story by: Stephanie Turner, Professor  
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*Sitting here in my bunker—I mean, basement; no, I mean, office—I’m ready at the laptop. Ready to receive earnest students with challenging questions about my carefully crafted assignments, now adapted to our COVID-19 all-digital classroom-slash-office. There, we can talk through our screens face-to-face in real time, almost as good as actual office hours in my actual office back at school. Almost.*

*I’m charged up, logged in, have all the necessary tabs open: our classroom “management system,” my work email, a couple of websites students need for homework, Gmail . . .*

*But, as I just posted over on Facebook while waiting for my first visitor for today’s virtual office hours, “I’ve been having trouble concentr”*

*I click on the New York Times tab, always there at the far left, forever updating. “Cases near 2 million,” one headline sighs. “Global Economy Faces Worst Slump Since Great Depression,” shouts another. Wait! What was that? Did I hear someone logging on? I click on the “Welcome” tab for my virtual office hours. Nope. I’m still the only one in the “room.”*

*All they have to do to get my attention when they enter my virtual office is say the password, “bananagrams” for one class, “monsters R us” and “all we need is science” for the other two, respectively. I’m trying to make this fun, this social distance learning. I hope somebody shows up soon.*

*Over in my Gmail account, more bad news. Something else important has been cancelled due to COVID-19. Something that wasn’t even supposed to happen until June. June! I thought for sure that was far enough out that we could, at least cautiously, start to ditch social distancing. Uh-oh. There’s that funny sprung spring noise. I click back over to my virtual office. “Are you still there?” My virtual office is talking to me now. I click the button that means “yes.”*

*Virtual office hours remind me that most of us are clicking the buttons that mean “yes” now, each of us in our own ways. Yes, despite the suffering and death wrought by this new jot of protein, a great many of us are still here. We are showing up for each other now in surprising new ways. Zoom yoga. Virtual happy hour. Music and games shared from platform to digital platform.*

*“Hello?” A hesitant voice calls from my laptop. Apparently this is someone who forgot the password. No matter! I pounce on the microphone button. “Hello! Can you hear me?” I’m desperate for the contact. “How are you?” I hit the video button. There we are!*

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**Artists:**

**Kierstyn Anglemyer, Student  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

**Sydney Beckfield, Student  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**