

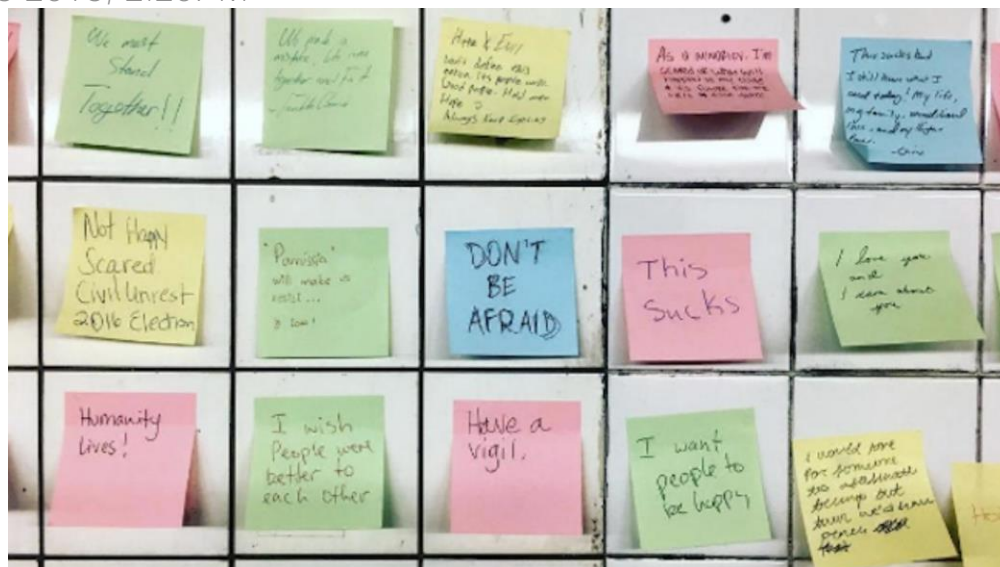
i-D

how young creatives are combatting anxiety in the age of trump

We talked to creatives and health care professionals about their strategies for dealing with anxiety in Donald Trump's America, from protesting and practicing self-care, to finding community offline and on.

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[facebook.com/subwaytherapy](https://www.facebook.com/subwaytherapy)

This summer, model Krit McClean made headlines for stripping naked in Times Square, climbing atop the TKTS booth, and screaming about Donald Trump. The bipolar 21-year-old — who has since [penned an eloquent response](#) about his manic episode — has not experienced a second one since Trump won the presidential election last week. But that doesn't mean he isn't concerned for his mental wellbeing.

"This past week has made my prophetic fears of June 30 come true," McClean tells i-D. "My mental health has been grounded, as my previous fears are now our current reality."

You don't need to be a diagnosed manic depressive to experience severe anxiety in this "current reality." Thousands of anxious New Yorkers have posted anguished sticky notes in the 14th Street tunnel at the urging of "Subway Therapist" Matthew Chavez. Faced with a President-elect who has nationalist and far-right ties, sexist and racist views, and a disregard for environmental issues, many young people are at best stressed, at worst [suicidal](#). It's unclear how psychological responses to a very different America will manifest themselves leading up to Trump's inauguration and over the following four years.

Self-care, like trigger-warnings and mindfulness, is often dismissed as a buzzword favored by delicate millennials and Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop. But it has existed long before Tumblr became a place to share survival and safety tips. Women of color feminists like Audre Lorde thought of self-care as radically political. "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare," Lorde wrote in ***A Burst Of Light: Essays*** in 1988. It's a malleable concept too, encompassing race and class as well as gender divides. Lorde passed away in 1992, but Trump may push society back an extra three decades. Certain groups are now facing four years living under a president who succeeded by appealing to many Americans' desire for a return to white nationalism.

NYC-based sexuality educator Keilicia Ariel wrote an essay in [Lenny](#) on Tuesday recalling the last time she felt the sense of panic installed by Wednesday morning's news. At the age of 15, she had a gun shoved in her face by an abusive ex-boyfriend. Revealing that a white classmate who witnessed the attack failed to make any attempt to stop it, Ariel turned to a friend who "knew what it meant to feel unsafe because of your blackness, because of your womanhood, because those things existing together signal to some that we are not deserving of protection from harm."

Ariel is now working with others on a comprehensive list of safety planning guides in the form of a collaborative, constantly evolving [Google document](#) that attempts to break down the overwhelming amount of information currently out there for the communities who need it most. "I asked a lot of friends who are doing organizing work, mostly women of color who are children of immigrants if they aren't immigrants themselves," she tells i-D. "I don't mean it lightly when I say we won't get through this without our people. I think that capitalism has tricked us into believing that it is the thing we need to survive. That's never been my reality. Community is the only reason I'm here."

Anyone who has scrolled through Instagram over the past week will be aware of one way young people are finding solidarity: protesting the President-elect. "Protesting is going to happen," says Ariel. "Don't feel forced to participate. Don't shame folks who do." She encourages people to stay safe by writing at least three emergency contact numbers on their body, making sure their phone is charged, and mapping alternate routes home.

America has a long history of protesting limits on civil rights, from the women's suffrage movement leading up to 1920 to the Selma to Montgomery march in 1965 to the current Standing Rock protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline. Some eventually bring victory, others are unlikely to. It's doubtful that the anti-Trump protests will change the outcome of the election, but the significance of millions of Americans visibly rejecting his values can't be underestimated. And protesting the President-elect is not the end point. "No matter what, remain proactive," says NYC psychologist Chloe Carmichael. "If you're concerned that Trump is going to compromise the rights of women, minorities, or the LGBTQ community, then go volunteer for organizations that protect those rights! The worst thing you can do for yourself — and the people you're concerned about — is to slide into apathy."

For some marginalized groups, self-care does not always feel enjoyable. New York-based activist Blair Imani recently told i-D about the difficult decision she made to no longer wear hijab in Trump's America. "As a Black American Muslim woman I am fully aware of the reality of discrimination in this country," she [writes](#). "Trading my hijab for more 'palatable' headcoverings does not liberate me from bigotry, it makes me feel a bit more safe." Speaking of the challenges that the next four years will pose for marginalized groups, she writes, "I urge everyone to exercise self-care and remember: bravery comes in many forms." Sometimes self-care feels more like survival.

Ariel agrees that self-care isn't always as easy as going for a walk and eating delicious food. "I think as I get older I realize that self-care is not always fun and often doesn't feel good," she tells us. "I suffer from anxiety, depression, and PTSD as a result of sexual and intimate partner violence so self-care to me means self-preservation. Sometimes that looks like a warm bubble bath but more often it's been doing things that are really, really hard for me like reaching out to ask people for support or ask them to check on me every couple days if I feel myself going into crisis." Self-care can involve shutting off from society, but often doing the opposite is far more beneficial.

Sometimes it's not always possible to get off the internet and go for a walk. People who work in digital media know this all too well, as do people of color who may not feel safe in public spaces right now. "What I've found the most helpful is to go out and be around people, in any capacity," architect/artist Jonathan Sun says. "Be around friends. Sit in coffee shops. Go to the movies. As a person of color myself though, I'm acutely aware that this advice isn't always possible. Lately we've been seeing public spaces become more and more unsafe."

Instead Sun is managing to practice self-care in the same place the rest of us are being sucked into a hole of increasingly terrifying news: Twitter. One of his many excellent Joe Biden/Barack Obama friendship [memes](#) — in which Biden tries to convince Obama to leave a fake birth certificate in a White House drawer — has amassed over 75 thousand likes. Sun has now created the brilliant self-care Twitter bot [@tinycarebot](#) that's making the internet a little less dark a place. So far over 20 thousand people have followed it for polite tips like "please remember to text your friends" and "look out the window for a quick second please."

"I think most of us are finding ourselves glued to social media lately," Sun says. "It's that horrifying feeling of not being able to look away. Because the bot was originally written as reminders to myself, it's catered specifically to that Twitter-obsessive type of anxiety. I think Twitter bots and internet comedy can help simply because we are all transfixed to our timelines right now in trying to cope, and they can show up unexpectedly among all the bad news. Hopefully it helps, if even a little."

A sense of camaraderie doesn't have to come from within your community either, online or IRL. "I started watching *The Crown* on Netflix," says one anonymous NYC-based creative. "Although it isn't exactly the feminist antidote that some girls are retreating within — and to each their own — it has been eye opening to the politics and female-reign of the monarch, specifically Queen Elizabeth II. Her sacrifice to lead and ability to divorce emotion from action and duty has low-key really inspired me these last few days."

The irony is that as conditions for optimum mental health devolve, our access to affordable health care will become more limited. Kinsey McManus, the services director at grassroots organization National Alliance on Mental Illness, explains how Trump taking office could impact the legislature on

mental health. "The repeal of the Affordable Care Act would strike a heavy blow to many people living with mental illness," she says. "This is because the ACA required parity for mental health and substance abuse services. Historically, the coverage for physical health concerns has been far greater than that of mental health and substance abuse services. For example, a person with diabetes could have monthly visits to a nutritionist covered while a person with an eating disorder may only be covered for one visit with a nutritionist each year."

Carmichael suggests that her clients try to look at the bigger picture. "Sometimes it also helps to consider the alternative, which would be to not live in a society with elections," she says. Certainly a lot can happen in four years, and it's crucial not to normalize the situation we'll very shortly be living in. But there's no harm in looking forward to the prospect of a Kanye West presidency in 2020.

McClean, meanwhile, prefers to think in specific dates — including the day Trump takes office on January 20. "My plan of action moving forward is to continue inspiring change in the only way I know how: creating art and making love," he says. "I'm unconcerned if that medium is acting, directing, singing, playing, or writing." And proving that he still has both thoughts of the future and a healthy sense of humor, "I know that I can't get naked anymore unfortunately unless I start modeling again!"

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