

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

These are very trying times that we have all been faced with and can leave us feeling anxious and stressed. These exercises, strategies, and daily affirmations are designed to help reduce any stress or anxiety that may come your way. Try one, two, or all of them. Encouraging and exercising self help is the basis for good mental health. Enjoy and remember to do things that make you HAPPY !!!

Quote for the Day	Mindfulness Exercises	Family Fun Strategies
<p><i>"This is your world; it is your feast....Look at the greatness of the whole thing. Look! Don't hesitate--look! Open your eyes. Don't blink, and look,look---look further.</i></p> <p><i>Chogyam Trungpa</i></p>	<p>Exercise 1- Sit still and look until the "you" disappears.</p> <p>Find a focus point in nature during your day, it can be something that you don't normally "see." Look at it deeply, what do you see that is different, how does it make you feel? Concentrate on the colors, the movements, even the sounds. Example: a tree, birdhouse, stream of water.</p>	<p>Plan this week's menus together. Let everyone choose a favorite meal for their special day. This is a good week to bake or get to those recipes that you put off until tomorrow. Eat healthy!</p>
<p><i>"The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself."</i></p> <p><i>Henry Miller</i></p>	<p>Exercise 2- Look for what is changing. (PS- Everything changes)</p> <p>Try to imagine what won't be the same tomorrow. Your mood today could be about a dream or thought from yesterday, how did that change you? The trick is to live in the moment. Find what makes you happy in this moment. Begin a book that you have wanted to read, start bingeing a new series that has been on your list. Begin that exercise program that you thought about on New Years! Commit to making it happen.</p>	<p>Set up a card table or end table with a puzzle. Encourage everyone to spend a few minutes each day adding to the puzzle.</p> <p>Dollar stores have puzzles of all sizes for all ages.</p>

<p><i>"The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible."</i> Oscar Wilde</p>	<p>Exercise 3- (This is one of my favorites) Look Up!</p> <p>Stand under a tree and look up. What do you see, how has the tree changed? Seasons change the tree but so does time and age. Now look between the branches, focus on the sky, the colors, the movements. You may notice a bird, bud, leaf etc. Take a mental picture or grab your camera and take a photo to save this moment.</p>	<p>Purchase some crayons,colored pencils and coloring books (they now make them for all ages.) Set aside some quiet time for a coloring contest. Display your work on a family bulletin board or the refrigerator.</p>
<p><i>"You need to let the little things that would ordinarily bore you suddenly thrill you."</i> Andy Warhol</p>	<p>Exercise 4- Take a Closer Look</p> <p>Pick up a leaf, a handful of sand, pebbles, a piece of tree bark. Look at what may be considered imperfections in the object and try to find it's natural beauty.</p>	<p>Family board game time. Choose a few favorites, monopoly, clue, scrabble to name a few. Turn off all devices and the tv and enjoy!</p>
<p><i>"If the sight of the blue skies fills you with joy, if a blade of grass springing up in the fields has power to move you, if the simple things of nature have a message that you understand, rejoice, for your soul is alive."</i> Elenora Duse</p>	<p>Exercise 5- Spend 30 minutes taking a five minute walk</p> <p>Take a step, breathe, look. Study things around you, the blades of grass, bark on trees, store windows, a dog being walked, cars whizzing by. Allow yourself to become distracted. Do not think of the destination, but enjoy the journey.</p>	<p>Pizza and a movie. However instead of purchasing the pizza, make the dough and toppings yourself. Everyone can have a hand in preparing. Choose a movie favorite from your childhood such as anything Disney.</p>

<p><i>“With freedom, books, flowers and the moon, who could not be perfectly happy?”</i></p> <p>Oscar Wilde</p>	<p>Exercise 6- Go on a Five Senses Walk</p> <p>During your walk outside, try to find 3-5 things that make each sense come alive. Focus on each one for a few seconds as you walk. What can you see, hear, taste, touch and smell?</p>	<p>Find the instrument. Challenge your children to see how many instruments they can name in several songs. Choose different genres of music to keep it a challenge. This promotes true active listening.</p>
<p><i>“ Every moment is a fresh beginning.”</i></p> <p>T.S.Eliot</p>	<p>Exercise 7- Bubble Breathing</p> <p>Breathe in slowly through the nose (for five) and out through the mouth (for five) as if you are blowing bubbles. The slower you breathe, the bigger the bubbles. Try for at least ten “bubble breaths.”</p>	<p>Play cards. Five Hundred rummy, war, go fish to name a few!</p>
<p><i>“ You need to only claim the events of your life to make yourself yours.”</i></p> <p>Florida Scott- Maxwell</p>	<p>Exercise 8- Begin a journal</p> <p>Journaling is different from writing. In your journal you are just putting words on paper. Begin with a list: Journal a gratitude list. Use your five senses as a filter of what you are most grateful for, see where it takes you.</p>	<p>Look through family albums of photos. We all have old photos, treat your children and yourself on a trip down memory lane. This is also a good time to sort through and organize printed photos.</p>
<p><i>“ We all survive MORE than we think we CAN.”</i></p> <p>Joan Didion</p>	<p>Exercise 9- Art as Therapy</p> <p>Drawing, painting, and even doodling can help reduce stress and depression and give you a new perspective on your life. Focus on color and shape, you may surprise yourself as your inner artist comes out on the paper.</p>	<p>Begin a classic novel together as a family. Some favorites: Wizard of Oz, Alice in Wonderland, The Secret Garden, Tom Sawyer.</p>

<p><i>"We generate fears while we sit, we overcome them by action."</i></p> <p><i>Anonymous</i></p>	<p>Exercise 10-Setting Goals</p> <p>Grab your journal and respond to these prompts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is one objective you'd like to achieve in the next six months? • In the next year? • In the next decade? 	<p>Enjoy some outside games. Kick a ball around, play badminton, make a hopscotch board, if you can find them, teach your kids to play jacks, jump rope, pick up sticks etc.</p>
<p><i>"If you listen to everyone, you will never hear yourself."</i></p> <p><i>Anonymous</i></p>	<p>Exercise 11- Let Go and Move On</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on today. So many things around us are out of our control. Always wondering what's going to happen next can cause more stress and anxiety. • Today focus on you and the world around you. Let go of yesterday and the things you did not get to. • Put yourself in the here and now as you travel through your day. • Journal how this exercise made you feel, what did you take notice of that you never saw before. • Prepare yourself for tomorrow with an open mind. 	<p>Make a batch of homemade play doh.</p> <p>Playdough ingredients:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2 cups all-purpose flour. 2. 3/4 cup salt. 3. 4 teaspoons cream of tartar. 4. 2 cups lukewarm water. 5. 2 Tablespoons of vegetable oil (coconut oil works too) 6. Food coloring, optional. 7. Quart sized bags. <p>What can you each create?</p>

<p><i>“ Why, who makes much of a miracle? As to me I know nothing else but miracles... To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle, Every cubic inch of space is a miracle.”</i></p> <p><i>Walt Whitman</i></p>	<p>Exercise 12- Message to the Future</p> <p>Here’s another journal writing exercise. Respond to the prompts in your journal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you could leave a message for people to read 100 years from now, what would you tell them about your life? • What lessons would you want to share? 	<p>Take a virtual vacation. Map out where you would go in the different seasons if money were no object!</p>
---	---	--