

APRIL STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEWSLETTER

— A NEWSLETTER FOR THE SEWARD STAFF BY DR. DOMINY —

E-LEARNING

I could not be more proud of you and how you have responded to the challenge of E-Learning. It has been truly amazing to see the leadership, creativity, and ingenuity that has taken place to create lessons that are meaningful and purposeful for students. I am proud of you who have picked up Google Classroom for the first time 10 days ago and I am proud of the teachers providing direct instruction and making groups in Zoom and everyone in that instructional delivery continuum. It truly is phenomenal how our world flipped in just a few days and with a little freedom and a little guidance, you created systems that phenomenally are meeting the needs of all students from preschool through 12th grade, students with special needs, English Language Learners, etc. etc. I think history will reflect on this time and look favorably on us for all that you have done for our students. I am truly thankful and here for each of you as we continue our E-Learning journey.

Thank you

Matt

STRESS/ANXIETY DURING THE TIME OF COVID-19

No matter who you are, feeling stressed and afraid is a normal response to an illness about which there is still so much to learn. The chronic stress that may result from constant fear and anxiety about the illness, and the isolation caused by social distancing and quarantine, can cause physical symptoms of its own.

Common symptoms of chronic stress include headaches, insomnia, muscle tension, stomach distress such as heartburn and acid reflux, and joint pain. You may also experience behavioral symptoms such as increased smoking, eating or drinking, and emotional symptoms such as irritability, anxiety, or depression. The demands of social distancing may mean that your usual stress management strategies such as going to the gym or hanging out with loved ones are no longer accessible to you. So here are some stress management techniques to get through the next few weeks or until life goes back to some sense of normalcy.

1. BREATHE

Taking slow deep breaths is a great way to calm down your entire body and your mind. To do this, close your eyes and take in a deep breath through your nose on a count of five, hold for a count of three, then breathe out through your mouth on a count of five. Repeat five times. Do this any time you feel stressed, to start your day in the right mood, and to get calm at the end of your day so you can get a good night's sleep.

2. PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

Focusing on breath is a simple start. You can also meditate with or without a mantra.

3. GO OUTSIDE

If you are one of the millions of people now working from home, and the weather is amenable, find a spot outside to take the laptop and the phone calls. This will help keep the stir crazies away.

4. LIMIT SOCIAL MEDIA AND NEWS CONSUMPTION

Yes, you want to stay up-to-date on the latest news about the virus or the stock market, but listening to the news all day-everyday is going to exacerbate any feelings of anxiety, stress, or sadness. Check the news and social media at set times of the day, and limit yourself to 15 minutes at a time. And when you get on social media, spend some time on things that make you smile or laugh, and touch your heart in some way.

5. EXERCISE—AND DO IT OUTSIDE

You need to exercise more than ever now. Take a walk, ride a bike, go for a run, take the yoga mat outside, or do some calisthenics in your backyard. Movement releases the pleasure hormone dopamine, which makes us feel good, and fresh air and sunshine are also great for boosting your mood. But remember to keep your distance. So go outside early in the morning or late in the evening, stay in your neighborhood, and forego public parks and trails.

6. CONNECT WITH LOVED ONES

If you live with others, now is a great time to spend some quality time together. Bring out the board games and the puzzles. Have long conversations. Call that friend or cousin you haven't spoken to in months. Do mindfulness exercises together. And if you find yourself needing some personal space, then formally structure some alone time for everyone so you don't annoy each other too much.

7. GET YOUR FINANCIAL HOUSE IN ORDER

Do your taxes. Go through your bank and credit card statements and cancel those unwanted subscriptions. Cancel travel plans. Make a budget. Manage your investments.

8. GET CREATIVE

If you find yourself with a lot of time on your hands, skip the binge-worthy series on Netflix and start that art or crafting or household project you haven't had time to do. Indulging your creativity is an excellent distraction and a great way to de-stress. Knit, paint, sew, or create a photo book of your last vacation.

9. JOURNAL

Put your feelings and thoughts down on paper. This is a historic time and this won't just help you process your emotions in the present but help you put this time in context later.

10. PRACTICE GRATITUDE

It can be easy to focus on all the negatives that result from dealing with a pandemic, so being deliberate in being grateful is a great way to counteract the negativity. Start and end each day by stating—or journaling—at least three things you are grateful for. Research shows that this increases feelings of optimism.

Retrieved From: <https://www.fastcompany.com/90481875/10-science-backed-strategies-to-try-if-youre-stressed-about-covid-19>

INDIVIDUAL TOUCHPOINTS ARE GAME-CHANGERS

What your students will miss the most is the human connection that is cultivated in your classroom. The little interactions you have with them in the hallways, before and after class or during breaks in lessons, are irreplaceable. While it can be tempting to focus on content in your distance learning assignments and instructional videos, what matters more is creating structures for personalized touchpoints with your students.

You can create these touchpoints through any medium you like: emails, video messages, phone calls, messages through your learning management system, comments on shared documents, etc. Create a structure and stick to it. Your students will see your investment and know that you care about them.

It's important to bear in mind that cultivating an engaging distance learning experience is hard. It takes time and an incredible amount of patience. If you are new to the experience, you're probably going to feel like a first-year teacher again. That's OK! Tackle the challenges step by step, keep your students updated on your progress, and stay positive. You can do this!

Retrieved From: <https://www.edutopia.org/article/4-tips-supporting-learning-home>

[Building Developmental Relationships During Covid-19 Crisis.](#)

ESU PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The ESU is going to start offering Grade Level/Department Level Support/Training. The schedule for these trainings is linked below. There is no need to register for any training that you are interested in, you only need to join the Zoom group at the day and time listed. This is optional professional growth that can offer you another opportunity to stay connected to educators in our area.

bit.ly/esu6hub

