

Meeting the challenges of self-care in challenging times

October is Mental Health Awareness Month

By Marshall Shimmon, SIA Prevention Services

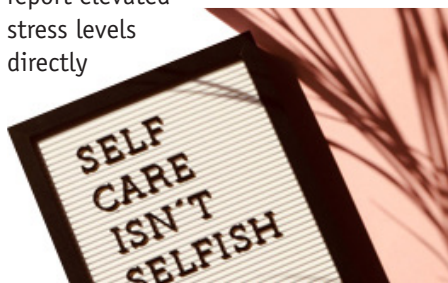
How has your mental health been affected by recent events in our nation? Our lives have been altered by events related to the impact of COVID-19 and many hotly debated civil and political issues. For those fortunate enough to maintain employment, there are additional challenges with social distancing, isolation and sheltering in place.

To preserve mental health during these challenging times, let's focus on a few strategies, such as making self-care a priority, allowing yourself to make positive contributions to your mental and physical health daily, and consistently redirecting your focus to things that you appreciate in your life.

Currently, most people are in a state of adjustment, which requires extra attention to maintain mental and physical health. Princeton.edu defines mental health as: "The psychological

state of someone who is functioning at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioral adjustment." Unless we live in a bubble, we're constantly in a state of emotional and behavioral adjustment.

Symptoms of mental illness such as depression, anxiety, anger and substance use can affect anyone. These symptoms can make it more difficult to appreciate what's good in our lives. Uncertainty about the economy, employment and being confined to home creates disruption in our lives as we establish a new normal. The vast majority of humans report elevated stress levels directly



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related to the perceived severity of change and the resources available to handle the change. Alterations related to employment rank high on most change rating assessments. Stanford.edu news reports that 42 percent of the U.S. labor force is working from home full-time and an additional 33 percent is unemployed.

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SIA's YouTube channel is another great resource for our members

By Deborah R. Camacho, MS, SIA Prevention Services

If you didn't know that SIA has its very own YouTube channel, you're not alone. So we thought it was now time to reveal our best-kept secret to continue our goal of offering as many resources as possible to our school district members, employees and families. We invite you to take a look at <https://www.youtube.com/user/SIA4Kids/videos>.

We recently held a five-part virtual workshop called "The Road to Relaxation & Stress Management," which offered viewers several easy-to-follow yet effective relaxation techniques. As a follow-up, we uploaded the videos with these relaxation tech-

niques directly to our SIA YouTube channel to help our district members continue their relaxation practice.

In addition, there are videos posted that cover topics such as Lifting and Carrying Safely, Playground Safety Update, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Risk Avoidance at School, EP4S (EpiPen) Training, and many others. As we continue to update the videos on this channel, please feel free to reach out to us and suggest ideas, tips or comments on videos you'd like to see in the near future.

- Take time to stay well
- Boost oral care, bolster immunity

Self-care in trying times

(continued from page 1)

Now that most people are working, teaching and studying from home, it's important to appreciate the benefits of a more flexible schedule and opportunities to do more things while there. Examples include spending time with family and/or pets, exercising, cooking healthy meals while saving money, working on home projects and even enjoying shows on Netflix. Many people benefit from a substantial time savings by not having to commute to and from work, and improve their mental health by dedicating some time to self-care.



Spending more time at home while multi-tasking simultaneous roles of employee, parent, spouse, companion, teacher and chef often leads people to neglect their own self-

care. There can be a significant ripple effect with making and sustaining positive mental health changes. For example, many people report greater confidence, reduced anxiety, improved sleep quality, and overall greater physical health as a result of implementing regular self-care practices.

Self-care, as summarized by self-care expert and goal coach Susannah Joy Winters, is: "Deliberately taking care of your well-being through restorative activities." Restorative practices include positive, healthy and beneficial activities that serve to restore our mental and physical well-being. One of the most basic and effective activities recommended is walking. I challenge you to think about a time when you finished a walk, a short workout or a challenging physical task and didn't feel better than before you started. When the body's engaged in physical activity, the respiratory, circulatory and nervous systems all work in unison to support that activity. In short, when the mind and body are in a state of flow for a sustained period of time, there's a positive shift in energy due to increased circulation and respiration. During exercise blood vessels dilate and the body brings in more oxygen.

As a goal, aim for three 10-minute intervals of uninterrupted, moderate-intensity physical activity doing something that you enjoy and during which you're breathing harder and your heart rate is elevated. The American College of Sports Medicine

and the American Heart Association recommend 30 minutes of moderate cardiovascular exercise each day to help prevent heart disease. One of the main benefits of moderate-intensity exercise is that it enables us to breathe more effectively because of the demand for oxygen from physical stress, as opposed to restricted breathing from emotional stress.

When we're stationary and sedentary for more than 30 to 40 minutes, our minds tend to go into "sleep mode," causing our systems to slow down and take in less oxygen. With sitting now described as "the new smoking," it goes without saying that less is better. When possible, take a break from sitting at least once every hour and get up and move around. Take time to focus only on your breathing to relax and melt away anxiety. For a guided tutorial on extended exhale breathing visit SIA's YouTube channel <https://youtu.be/VoFGfSsKkyA>.

To develop mental resilience during the uncertain times beyond our control, it's important to manage how we think, feel and behave. Work toward good mental health by making a conscious effort daily to prioritize self-care, adopt a positive mental outlook and practice focused breathing.

Contact SIA Prevention Services to schedule a virtual training on self-care for your worksite group at prevention@sia-jpa.org.

Boost your oral hygiene and your immune system

Seeing your dentist might be difficult right now, but the good news is you can treat yourself to quality dental care right in the comfort of your home. By being proactive about your oral care, you can significantly lessen your risk of gum disease and other oral health-related conditions that can weaken your immune system.



Delta Dental enrollees have the opportunity to learn more about an ideal at-home care routine and receive discounts on mouth care products by joining BrushSmart, an oral wellness program. As a BrushSmart member, you'll receive special offers on dental products, tips on home dental care and recommendations on tools to meet your needs.

For more information, visit the Delta Dental site:

http://dd.deltadentalins.com/brushsmart?utm_source=employer-group&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=128459-brushsmart&utm_content=cta1-group



Wash, rinse, dry, repeat is proper cloth face mask care

Lyn M. Poll, M.S., SIA Prevention Services

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) remains consistent in recommending the use of face masks to help battle the coronavirus, especially for people living with health issues or in hard-hit areas. It's important to wear a face mask in public to protect yourself and others against the virus, and it's equally important to take proper care of the mask itself.



Ever since the pandemic hit, researchers have been studying how long the virus can live on various surfaces. According to one report in *The Lancet*, the virus can be present for up to seven days on the outer layer of a mask. Therefore, the CDC recommends washing your mask after every use. It's also a good idea to have at least two masks so that they can be rotated. This will enable you to have a fresh, clean mask available at all times.

As for the blue disposable surgical masks, it's not recommended that you wash these; they should be thrown away after each use.

How to launder your cloth mask

Ryan Sinclair, from the School of Public Health at Loma Linda University, recommends laundering cloth masks using the following steps:

- Remove detachable parts, such as filters or detachable ear bands.
- Use a mesh laundry bag to reduce entanglement with other clothes during washing.
- Set the machine water temperature to high or use water that's 140 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Use your washer's "sanitize" cycle if it has one.
- Use a detergent that contains disinfectant or bleach to ensure you're killing as many germs as possible. If you're washing by hand, prepare a bleach solution of 1/3 cup bleach per gallon of room-temperature water, soak for at least five minutes, then rinse thoroughly with cool or room temperature water.
- Dry masks on the highest dryer setting or use direct sunlight to dry masks. Ultraviolet light from the sun can kill 99.99% of pathogens on the sun-facing surface. Leaving your mask in the bright sun during the middle of the day for at least one hour can help kill most bacteria. However, it's best to expose the mask to the sun and heat for an entire day, flipping it over at midday.
- Store clean masks in a sanitized area until you're ready to use them.

To further reduce the transmission of germs:

- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer prior to putting on your mask.
- Make sure the exterior of your mask is not touching your face.
- Wear your mask snugly over both your nose and mouth.
- Try not to touch the front of your face or mask.
- Remove your mask by grasping the ear loops or untying the ties, the bottom ones first, then the top ones.
- Wash hands thoroughly after removing the mask.

It's recommended that masks made from other materials, such as neoprene, be cleaned according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Resources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wash-cloth-face-coverings.html>

<https://news.llu.edu/health-wellness/part-of-wearing-mask-washing-mask-here-s-best-way>

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247\(20\)30003-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247(20)30003-3/fulltext)

Quote to Note

Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.

– Buddha

The material in this newsletter should be part of your Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP).

Keep a copy of this newsletter in your IIPP binder and be sure all employees receive a copy.

- Process emotions by naming them
- COVID-19 resources

Navigating the landscape of emotions

Michele Mariscal, SIA Prevention Services

One of the opportunities for individuals and organizations in this time of COVID-19 is growth in emotional intelligence. Our culture is all about “just stay strong” and “just stay busy” and we can power through difficult emotions. However, there’s research that explains why it’s helpful to name what we’re feeling instead of merely passing over challenging emotions.

Our bodies continually track all of the emotional signals we experience and continually shift from nervous system activity to hormonal system activity. When we pass over difficult emotions, there’s an increased tendency for these emotions to build up, as with a pressure cooker, to the point that we react and then sometimes explode. (A number of mental health professionals are reporting an increase in depression and depressive moods among their patients.)

One of the exercises I do when I facilitate The Resilience Advantage training from the Institute of HeartMath® is called Emotional Landscape. In this exercise, participants name emotions that occur in four different quadrants related to the intensity of that emotion. This is often an eye-opening exercise for people, especially when they recognize how much time during a week they’re spending in depleting emotional states without actively processing them, or at least being mindful of them.

In a UCLA study, Dr. Matthew D. Lieberman found that subjects who put feelings into words make sadness, anger and pain less intense. When we have fear and anger, the part of the brain called the amygdala shows increased activity. By naming these feelings and emotions, the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that inhibits irrational behavior and helps us make better decisions, becomes active.

Many times during the current pandemic I found that underneath my anger was fear or worry. I learned this because I took the time to tune in to my inner world to name what I was currently feeling. Doing this allowed the deeper emotion that

was driving the anger to surface. On one occasion, the processing of that emotion involved crying – and I give you permission to cry as needed these days! Harvard Business Review recently published an article that provided guidance for managers on what to do when their employees cry at work, noting that crying on the job is likely not an if but a when. I found this an encouraging sign of growth in emotional intelligence! Most don’t understand that relieving those pressure cooker emotions is what helps normalize neurotransmitters that stabilize mood and sleep. Having a safe place, space and people to talk to is critical at this time. All of us need to listen to our own inner dialogue and be a listening heart for others.

One of the keys to listening in this way is to do so without offering advice, suggestions or analysis; offering advice is



a subtle way of dismissing what was just shared. All of us are experiencing loss in some way and this can be cause for grief. Grievors don’t need to be fixed, they just need to be heard. So, listen and express acknowledgement in some way. Remember, the science that tells us that just having the opportunity to name our feelings shifts the signaling from the amygdala, which holds patterns of fear, to the prefrontal cortex, through which we’re able to move forward into the next moment with a better ability to adapt and make wise choices.

COVID-19 information and resources

SIA has two COVID-19-dedicated pages on our website to assist our members. The *Coronavirus Guidance for Schools and School Districts* page provides information and links to governmental and regulatory resources to keep districts updated. There’s also information to help keep employees serving essential functions on district property safe. The *COVID-19: Remote Work and Wellness Resources* page provides links to information for those who are working from home. There’s also guidance for maintaining mental and physical health, ergonomic tips for home offices, and financial education links.

Both pages can be accessed from the “Hot Topics” section on our home page at www.sia-jpa.org.



NCITs are key to virus screening •
WeTip works •



wellness
& safety



Non-contact infrared thermometers need to be accurate to be effective

Lyn M. Poll, M.S., SIA Prevention Services

As schools consider reopening during the COVID-19 pandemic, extra precautions are being taken. Students will find many new safety protocols in place when they eventually return to campuses. First and foremost, because the coronavirus spreads through contact, many school districts will begin screening students and staff for symptoms related to the virus. One potential screening method will likely employ non-contact infrared thermometers or NCITs, which can provide a safe, quick and effective way to screen large groups of people. But it must be used correctly to be effective. Improper use can impact the performance of these devices, which is why it's important to understand how to properly use the NCIT. Following are a few basic guidelines for NCIT usage, presented by the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which strongly recommends following manufacturer guidelines and instructions for the specific NCIT being used. Following the information and recommendations for proper use can ensure the utmost accuracy of the device. Here are some general steps to take when using an NCIT:



Preparing the environment

- Use your NCIT in a draft-free space, and away from direct sun and radiant heat sources.
- Check the ambient temperature. It should be between 60.8-104 degrees Fahrenheit, with a relative humidity below 85 percent.
- Place the NCIT in the testing environment for 10 to 30 minutes prior to use to allow the NCIT to adjust to the environment.

Preparing the person being evaluated

- Before taking an individual's temperature, make sure any hair, dirt or dust is removed from the forehead and the forehead is dry.
- Check to make sure the temperature at the forehead test area has not been increased or decreased by wearing excessive clothing or head covers (headbands, bandanas, etc.); by a warm/cold compress on the forehead; or as a result of recently used facial cleansing products, such as cosmetic wipes.

Using the NCIT

- Instruct the person to remain stationary during the measurement and hold the NCIT sensor perpendicular to the forehead.
- The distance between the NCIT and the forehead is specific to each device, but the average is 1 1/2 to 2 inches away. Consult the manufacturer's instructions.
- Don't touch the sensing area and keep the sensor clean and dry.

These are just a few general guidelines on how to achieve good results from your NCIT device. The best way to attain optimal results and accuracy is to read and follow manufacturer guidelines and instructions.

Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration, "Non-contact Infrared Thermometers"
<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices>

SAFE Credit Union webinars for SIA members

To assist with personal financial education, the SAFE Credit Union is offering free webinars for SIA school district member employees. All sessions will be from noon to 1 p.m. Upcoming sessions are:

September 9 – Budgeting

September 16 – Advanced Budgeting

October 14 – Emergency Savings – Even in Challenging Times

November 4 – Smart Holiday Shopping

To register for a session or view a recording of a past session, visit the *COVID-19 Remote Work and Wellness Resources* page of the SIA website at www.sia-jpa.org or contact Teresa Franco at tfranco@sia-jpa.org.

Use WeTip

For more information

contact Teresa Franco at tfranco@sia-jpa.org or 916-364-1281, ext. 1256.



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