

Managing Your Mental Health:

Tips & Resources For Promoting Your Psychological Well-Being

By Lindsay Costello, LAC, SAC

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and our entire district guidance staff and I want to reach out to offer tips & resources to promote psychological wellness during this difficult time.

A wise person once told me, *"Feelings aren't right or wrong... they just are."* The social distancing regulations enforced on us may bring up challenging emotions that are difficult to navigate. Maybe you are stricken with conflicting feelings such as gratitude and frustration, or perhaps you are fully engulfed in emotions of sadness, anger, or fear (just to name a few). There is no "normal" response to such a unique situation; in fact, I have made it a personal mission to challenge the notion of "normal" altogether.

Should you or your loved one need help to traverse this stormy course, there are options available. Many insurance companies are waiving out-of-pocket expenses for teletherapy and some are even offering free life coaching sessions. If you are without insurance, there are counseling options available to you as well. Tracie Kearney, Jackson Memorial High School's Student Assistance Coordinator (SAC), offers telehealth resources for youth and adults [here](#). Within each school in Jackson School District there is someone to assist you - By reaching out to a SAC or School Counselor, we can help pair you or someone you care for with resources in the community. Contact information for each of our district schools is below.

Also, there are a wealth of initiatives you can take on your own to increase your overall psychological health. Below, I offer tips from the SAC for promoting emotional well-being and resources for reaching out. After all, asking for help is one of the boldest acts of self-care one can take.

*"If everything around you is dark.
Look again.
You may be the Light."
-13th-century poet, Rumi*

Tips From The SAC

Build a Self-Soothe Kit

- ❑ A self-soothe kit is any container including items that inspire peace by appealing to the five senses. So, what's in the SAC's self-soothe kit? I keep a picture of my daughter's smiling face, essential oils (lavender is a must for me), my favorite hand lotion, packets of chamomile tea, a hand-written quote that reads, *"Life will bring you pain all by itself. Your responsibility is to create joy."*, and a pencil and notepad for sketching and for jotting down a few things I'm grateful for. Speaking of gratitude...

Practice Gratitude

- ❑ An article published in Harvard Health states, *"In positive psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships."*

Some simple gratitude practices: set a daily reminder on your phone to "be thankful" - when it goes off, name something you're thankful for; make a list of three things you're grateful for each day; write a thank you letter to someone expressing your appreciation for them.

Breathe

- ❑ Spiritual guru Eckhart Tolle says, *"One conscious breath in and out is a meditation."* Find your breath amid chaos. With one hand over your heart and one on your belly, listen to the air sweep in and out, feel the rise and fall of the belly, and the rhythm of your heartbeat. There are many *free* resources you can download to guide you through breathwork and meditation; I've included some below...



Exercise

- ❑ There is abundant research to support exercise as a natural and effective treatment of anxiety and depression. Change can be overwhelming. I say lower the bar and start small. Perhaps a simple walk around the block is

the best place to start. A bonus to getting your body moving outdoors: an opportunity to soak up vitamin D, which is also linked to increased mood. Check out McAuliffe Middle School's SAC, Lauren Sac's daily workouts [here!](#)

Yoga

- ❑ Yes, yoga is a form of exercise. But the yogi that I am decided to make it a category of its own! As a yoga instructor, people often tell me they "can't" do yoga, that they're "not flexible enough". What I have to say? *Not true!* Yoga is for *every body* - If you can take a breath in and out then you can do yoga. Try my recommendation below for Five Parks Yoga which offers online beginner, intermediate, and advanced yoga classes, or Alo's Yoga For Kids. And if you don't have a mat, the floor beneath you will do just fine.



What You Eat Matters!

- ❑ What you eat directly affects your mental health. In the article "[Five Rules For Eating Away your Depression](#)", Holistic Psychiatrist, Kelly Brogan MD tells us that processed, denatured foods have been widely linked to poor memory function, hyperactive immune response, and inflammation, all of which affect symptoms of depression.

Changing your diet may feel like a daunting task. Start by picking one meal to focus on where you pile in some extra nutrients. Or perhaps, make a few small adjustments throughout the week, like drinking seltzer instead of that can of soda, or using raw honey to sweeten your coffee and not that artificial sweetener. The proof is in the pudding (pun intended), when you eat better you feel better physically and emotionally. Try it out and see for yourself!

Sleep Heals

- ❑ Yes, mood impacts sleep. But, it may shock you to learn the science which backs that poor sleep can precipitate and exacerbate mental illness. I believe in a holistic approach to all things healing. Balancing activity, environmental factors, and nutritional intake (but not limited to) can work in synchronicity to offer the body and mind the necessary sleep it requires for healing.

There are many tips for promoting sleep hygiene. The National Sleep Foundation offers [Sleep Guidelines During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). I recommend poking around this site further to increase your knowledge of sleep and ways to improve it.

Reach Out For Support



For help finding resources in your community, reach out to a SAC or School Counselor.

***For all life-threatening emergencies, dial 911 immediately.*

Jackson School District SAC & School Counselor Contact List:

Grade K-5

Crawford-Rodriguez Elementary School

Anna Yavener

AYavener@jacksonsd.org

Elms Elementary School

Dara Feibelman

dfeibelman@jacksonsd.org

Holman Elementary School

MaryAnn Garbooshian

MAGarbooshian@jacksonsd.org

Howard C. Johnson & Rosenauer Elementary Schools

Erin Schnorbus

eeschnorbus@jacksonsd.org

Switlik Elementary School

Patricia DeBenedetto

pdebenedetto@jacksonsd.org

Grade 6-8

Carl W. Goetz Middle School

Lindsay Costello

lcostello@jacksonsd.org

Christa McAuliffe Middle School

Lauren Sacs

lsacs@jacksonsd.org

Grade 9-12

Jackson Liberty High School

Laureen Caggiano

lcaggiano@jacksonsd.org

Jackson Memorial High School

Tracie Kearney

tkearney@jacksonsd.org

Resources for Youths & Adults

Life-threatening Emergencies:

For a life-threatening emergency, always dial 911.

An emergency is considered to be any serious and sudden medical, emotional, or behavioral health situation that, if not given immediate professional attention, could lead to your child being severely harmed or possibly harming someone else.

Urgent situations:

If your situation is not immediately life-threatening, contact [PerformCare](#) at 1-877-652-7624 and follow the menu prompts provided for an urgent situation.

Additional Resources...

Visit the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to learn more about [navigating a mental health crisis](#) and how to access [NAMI NJ services during COVID-19](#).



[Second Floor Youth Helpline](#): Text/Call 888-222-2228

- 24/7 support
- Spanish Speaking options
- 2ndfloor.org

[Crisis Text Line](#): Text 'HOME' to 741741

- [crisistextline.org](#)

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): 1-800-273-8255

- The Lifeline provides 24/7 free and confidential support for people during emergencies. The Lifeline also helps specific groups, such as youth, loss survivors, veterans, LGBTQ+, and more, cope with suicidal thoughts.

[NJ Hopeline](#): 1-855-654-6735

- The NJ Hopeline has specialists available 24/7 who offer counseling and support over the phone.

Telehealth Resources

*For additional telehealth resources, contact your insurance provider or reach out to a SAC or School Counselor today.

High Focus Centers

Offering telehealth services for [adults](#) & [teens](#).

- currently accepting new patients
- accepts most private insurance

*Parents & Caregivers: FREE Parent Education & Support Group Webinar offering tips on how to support your child and help your family adapt to “new normal”

- When: May 11th at 6 pm
- RSVP by email to jmazzo@highfocuscenters.com (space is limited)



Genpsych

[Telehealth services](#) for Adults, Children, & Adolescents

- accepts Medicaid & private insurance



Preferred Behavioral Health Group

Telehealth services available for all ages

- 732 367 4700



Center For Wellness

Offering telehealth services

• (732) 655-4239



Psychology Today

Find detailed listings for mental health professionals

