

AUTISM NEWSLETTER



5 - Simple Ways To Find Calm

1. Take some belly breaths: A few long, deep belly breaths coupled with calming sounds provide rhythmic healing to a worn-out nervous system. Before you go to sleep or first thing when you awaken, step outside and just listen to the night or morning sounds. Sit comfortably, and for two or three minutes take a few deep breaths, exhaling a few seconds longer than you inhale. Listen to the rhythm of the crickets, katydids, or morning birds. (See the rest of the tips on Page 2)

5 Simple Ways To Manage Stress This Year

By Lori Desautels - Written in Edutopia "Teacher Wellness"

Educators this year are faced with a multitude of decisions and reflexive reactions as schools and communities try to create the safest plans for the return to school, and the chronic unpredictability of this situation wears on our nervous systems

Why is this? Our brains and bodies are being flooded with millions of bits of sensory information every day, but with an increase of anxiety and worry, these sensations can trigger our stress response systems, causing our bodies and brains to move into a survival state where we find ourselves feeling chronically unsafe, dysregulated, and stressed.

These feelings can show up in the body as tightness, tense muscles, headaches, nausea, rapid heart-beat, shortness of breath, or a variety of other sensations. If we do not metabolize and process how we are experiencing these sensations and emotions, our immune systems can become compromised and we find ourselves living day after day in a fight, flight, or freeze response. Unprocessed negative emotions can be expressed in our bodies, and we can feel a knot in our stomach or a lump in our throat, or we may become choked up and teary. We may feel hot and sweaty, or experience a pounding in our ears or heads.

When we're aware of these sensations and feelings, we can begin to address our mental and physical well-being. Below are practices and strategies that address nervous system regulation and can be implemented in just a minute or two each day.

A calm brain can calm another brain. When we find our inner balance and feel grounded, we're able to share this with our students and colleagues. Emotions, negative or positive, are contagious, and when we prioritize the health of our nervous systems, we can share that health and well-being with all those around us.

2. Try a yoga

pose: There is growing research on the benefits of certain yoga poses to relieve anxiety and calm the nervous system. One of the most powerful ways to feel immediate relief from the overwhelming sensations of the day is to lie on your back with your legs straight up at a 90-degree angle against a wall. You can place a pillow under your head, but with your legs elevated, take a few minutes and breathe all the way down to your belly, feeling it rise and fall with each inhale and exhale. This pose produces a release of anxiety in the body.

3. Talk to your-

self: Talking out loud to yourself, especially in the third person, can be extremely helpful in stressful moments. If you're by yourself, say what you need to say about a problem and then talk about options or outcomes. Validate and soothe yourself. If you're not alone, take a minute to write down your concerns and challenges until you can speak them aloud later. Try adding soothing and comforting words you need to hear, and say those out loud whenever you need them.

4. Control what you can

control: When we're feeling anxious, overwhelmed, and worried, we can lose perspective on what is realistic and in our control, so it can be helpful to create a short list of the experiences, events, or situations that we can control and those we cannot. Sometimes when we're feeling dysregulated, we forget to pause, step back, and try to find a deeper perspective. As educators, we tend to want to fix problems, soothe troubled student feelings, and quickly find a solution. Often, we need to let go and observe, allowing the experience to unfold. Follow the quiet. Allow the quiet of contemplation to enter, and to leave when its work is completed. this nerve and initiate a calm nervous system response in the brain and body.

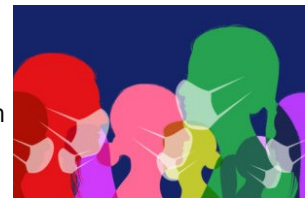
5. Hum or

sing: Humming and singing activate the vagus nerve, a critical nerve that flows from the brain stem throughout most of our body. It is associated with functions of the body that are automatic, like swallowing, digesting, and the heart's beating, and it relays signals to the brain that all is well or not. Activating this nerve basically tells your brain that you are calm and relaxed, while stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system to slow your heart rate and respiration and lower your blood pressure. Our voice box is connected to the vagus nerve, so when we hum or sing, we activate this nerve and initiate a calm nervous system response in the brain and body.

Helping people with autism spectrum disorder manage masks and COVID-19 tests

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented many new challenges for people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Features of ASD, including impaired social and communication skills, repetitive behaviors, insistence on sameness, and especially sensory intolerances, make adapting to wearing face masks and the experience of a COVID-19 test particularly challenging. Click the following link to read the entire article.

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/helping-people-with-autism-spectrum-disorder-manage-masks-and-covid-19-tests-2020061020089>



Stress Management and Resilience - Daily Intention
MAYO CLINIC

- ◇ As I begin this day I will be reminded to pay joyful attention to each moment
- ◇ I will pay kind attention to all those that I meet
- ◇ I will be grateful for all my blessings
- ◇ I will cultivate compassion for others and toward myself
- ◇ I will accept anything that comes my way today and focus on what is most important that I have control over
- ◇ I will find meaning and purpose in my work and relationships
- ◇ I will forgive the past and forgive for the future
- ◇ May I be a present to what the day has to offer and have grace in my opportunities to be in service to others and myself.

Mayo Clinic Integrative
Medicine Program

RESILIENCE Virtual Screening- December 3rd-5th

Join the Goodhue County Child & Family Collaborative on December 3rd-5th for a special virtual screening of the award-winning documentary RESILIENCE, a critically-acclaimed film that explores the science of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the birth of a new movement to treat and prevent Toxic Stress. Registered participants will receive a link to view the film anytime during the 48-hour viewing period, which will begin on Thursday, December 3rd at 7:00 p.m. Registration is required. Please register by December 1st at <https://forms.gle/sJxLxne3KqZw6k5p8>

View the trailer here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=We2BqmjHN0k>

Mental Health Resource Guides



The Mental Health Coalition
of Goodhue County

One of the very first needs identified by The Mental Health Coalition of Goodhue County was a comprehensive mental health resource guide. These guides aim to increase mental health literacy and knowledge about how to access services. There are three guides: one for the **community**, one for **school staff**, and another for **parents and caregivers**. Click on the following link to access the guides.

<https://www.gccfc.org/mentalhealth>

YOGA

Free YOGA app

Calling all students and teachers!

Stressful times like the COVID-19 outbreak are precisely when people need wellness practices the most, and we want to do our part to help out.

In response to rising cases and school closures taking place, we have made all of our apps **completely free until July 1st, 2021 for all students and teachers** (K-12 and college) so that they can have access to wellness at home through the end of the semester.

<https://www.downdogapp.com/schools>