



Public Safety Psychological Services

20818 44th Ave W, Suite 150, Lynnwood, WA 98036
Office (425) 775-4477, fax (425) 527-0466

Cerise M. Vablais, MBA, PhD, ABPP cvablais@psspc.net
Board Certified Specialist in Police and Public Safety Psychology

Staying Sane In Insane Times - Issue #5

This weekly tip sheet is to support you and your families during this ongoing public health event. During our annual wellness visits, using the acronym **PIES**, we discuss ideas for staying healthy and resilient. We welcome your ideas – email us at cvablais@psspc.net As always, if you or a loved one are feeling suicidal, please call “911”, Code4 Northwest or the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

Physical Health – the “**P**”

1. **Sleep:** As a first responder, you are likely to have sleep issues in normal times. Many departments are running different and fluctuating shifts in response to the pandemic. To function at our best, most people need *at least 7 8 hours of sleep* To assist with falling and stay asleep I recommend 1) **no blue lights or screens** of any kind for at least an hour before you want to fall asleep; 2) **Warm shower, bath or tea** really does relax the nervous system; 3) **Avoid working out less than 3 hours** before you want to sleep and 4) **try Yoga Nidra** – this is a guided relaxation technique that has been shown to be effective in first responders and military service members in promoting restful sleep. (Do an internet search for “yoga nidra” – there are plenty of free classes).
Goal: Develop a sleep routine that includes _____.

Intellectual Health – the “**I**”

1. **Ground yourself in Reality.** There is a LOT of misinformation in the news and social media about the pandemic. **Find your own favorite EVIDENCE based source on information.** Short form: *The COVID19 virus is new, there is no vaccine yet, it is probably more lethal than the flu, and the best minds in the world don't really know how it works yet.* Basically, are so many unknowns with this virus that it makes it extremely challenging from a public health perspective. **Stay based in the day to day reality of the situation you are in. Take all the precautions that you can. Consider how your choices affect those around you.** Some people's reaction to fear is to downplay or just blow things off. That can be a protective mechanism to allow humans to do dangerous things. **Find that balance in your own head.**
Challenge: Consider your own internal beliefs about the virus. Ask yourself if you are in line with prevailing guidance. If not, consider why that might be? Any pros or cons to your beliefs?

Emotional Health – the “**E**”

1. **While you are considered an “essential” worker, many of you are working from home.** This can become taxing without thoughtful planning. Consider if your style is a “work around the clock style” or if setting a hard boundary for your work hours works better. **Neither style is better** but it's important to think about your work style and how you may unconsciously expect others to have the same style as you. So, if you are a “work around the clock” person who takes longer lunch breaks to exercise and then works later into the day/evening, you may expect others to answer your “after hours” emails or text. If your colleague is a “boundary” worker who is maintaining the more standard 9 to 5 schedule, you may wonder why they aren't answering quickly and they may wonder why you are bothering them “after hours.”
GOAL: I will consider my work from home “style” and communicate that to _____.

Spiritual Health – the “**S**”

1. **Alcohol use:** Most treatment providers believe substance abuse stems in part from a lack of connection to *something outside ourselves.* Alcohol sales are up dramatically since the beginning of the pandemic. Alcohol is a depressant and will likely make you feel worse, not better. It can also lower your immune system. **Drinking daily and/or drinking more than 1-2 drinks a day is reason to be concerned.**
Challenge: Check in with yourself around the level of alcohol you are consuming. If it's increased, consider if you are making the best choices for your physical and mental health. If you need help, please reach out. Help is free, anonymous and available 24/7 at AA.org.

“Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today.” – Thich Nhat Hanh



Public Safety Psychological Services

20818 44th Ave W. Suite 150, Lynnwood, WA 98036
Office (425) 775-4477, fax (425) 527-0466

Cerise M. Vablais, MBA, PhD, ABPP cvablais@psspc.net
Board Certified Specialist in Police and Public Safety Psychology

Staying Sane In Insane Times –“PIES” for Kids and Teens #4

During our annual wellness visits, using the acronym **PIES**, we discuss ideas for staying healthy and resilient. We welcome your ideas – email us at cvablais@psspc.net *As always, if you or a loved one are feeling suicidal, please call “911”, Code4 Northwest or the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255.*

Physical Health – “P”

1. **Minimize sugar.** A lot of folks have been baking since the “shelter in place” started. We are now more than a month in, so, similar to the end of the year holidays, ***it’s time to reign it in.*** ☺ Start monitoring the amount of sugar kids are consuming, and help them make healthier choices. *Having “treats” every night can lead to more longer term nutritional challenges.*
2. **Get outside at least once a day.** *Preferably for at least 30 minutes.* Go for a walk with your child and ***challenge them to play a game with you where you each have to notice something new.*** If your child enjoys competitive games, you can make it a contest. Anything works, a change in the bloom status of a plant, an empty street that used to be crowded, etc. This exercise can help them when they are feeling bored and is a subtle reminder of how things continue to change and evolve.

Intellectual Health – “I”

- **Project Based Learning:** Take some time this week to have your child make a list of things they are interested in. *I suggest aiming for 10 -hopefully from a few different general areas of interest.* Create a folder or box (shoe boxes work) for each project idea. Depending on their age, help them search for information about their project. *At the end of each day or week, have them present their learnings on their topic of interest.*

Emotional Health – “E”

- **Build a time capsule.** Work together as family to create ***a time capsule to open 10 years from now.*** A plastic tub of any size will work along with some duct tape to wrap around it to keep it “sealed” until the date you pick 10 years in the future. You can hide this in your house if you don’t want to bury it. I suggest you have kids add drawings, stories, print outs of emails from teachers and friends, hard copy newspapers if you get them, etc. ***Focusing on creating a time capsule together can be fun but is also a subtle way to reinforce the idea that things will get better and this will be an important time to look back on.*** Kids may want to include some of their ideas from previous newsletters in this series.

Spiritual Health – “S”

- **Morning routine for kids.** Talk with your children about developing a ***morning routine that includes a glass of water, some stretching and a few minutes of mindful planning for their day.*** Children thrive on routine and creating a new routine can be very helpful and can be independent of whatever goes on in the outside world. Use the contact chalkboard paper I mentioned in Issue #1 for your child to write down her or his routine.
- **Ask kids to answer the following question every morning:** “What am I grateful for today? What can I create or do today that will help my family or those around me? ***Continuing to foster a sense of connection will help all of us come out of this stronger and more resilient.***

"Happiness can be found, even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light.

– Dumbledore