



Public Safety Psychological Services

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Staying Sane In Insane Times – “Flexibility”

Noun “the quality of bending easily without breaking”

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”, Code4NW at 425-243-5092 or the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

Physical Health – the “P”

STRETCH!. Balanced exercise programs MUST include stretching. It’s what keeps us young! Most of us do no formal stretching. *Start. Now.* I recommend stretching while you watch TV or incorporating it at the beginning and end of your workouts.

Goal: Spend 5 minutes a day stretching. Take a one minute break every hour to stretch your hands, arms and fingers if you are desk bound and your legs and calves if you are mostly walking.

Intellectual Health – the “I”

Brainstorming. Many of us can get into a rut which can lead to feeling down and even hopeless when faced with challenges. Developing and maintaining intellectual flexibility is not only fun, it’s actually really good for your brain’s long term health.

Challenge: Identify a struggle or challenge you are facing. Write it down. Then, take 10 minutes to write as many solutions as you can think of, no matter how far-fetched they may seem. After 10 minutes, stop and see if you can see themes within your solutions. Pick at least 2-3 theme groups and spend some time writing the pros and cons of each solution. This method can assist in developing unique and innovative solutions to challenges.

Emotional Health – the “E”

Practice flexibility in your emotions. Conflict can often come from cognitive or emotional rigidity, meaning we are entrenched in our own view points. *To combat this sometimes natural tendency, we need to take a step back, and practice patience and active listening.* We may not agree with what someone else is saying but we can detach from any rigidity of thought and hear them out. Having this flexibility of thought will generally decrease our own emotional reactions.

Goal: I will make a concerted effort to listen before I speak this week if I am feeling tense or attached to my beliefs.

Spiritual Health – the “S”

Work on acceptance. Most of us are familiar with the Serenity Prayer :“God¹ , grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change I can and the wisdom to know the difference.” *Understanding what is beyond our control is critical to spiritual health.* This can be something big, like a health related challenge or something relatively small, like having a sink always clear of dirty dishes when you have all the kids home. *It’s ok to accept things and let stuff go.* Radical acceptance frees us up to turn or attention and action to things we CAN change.

Challenge: Let something go. Seriously, just let it go.

“Blessed are the hearts that can bend; they shall never be broken.” – Albert Camus

¹ If “God” doesn’t work for you substitute whatever universal entity you want here or your own internal intuitive wisdom



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

Flexibility Noun *“the quality of bending easily without breaking”*

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Physical Health – “P”

- **STRETCH!** With all the sitting in front of screens, kids (and adults) may be feeling stiff. So, break out the yoga mats (or go outside) and stretch. Taking short breaks every hour to stretch arms, hands and fingers can do wonders for keeping the blood flowing. Smaller kids may have fun pretending they are different animals – how would a dog stretch? A cat? A lion?

Intellectual Health – “I”

- **Challenge yourself to see things from a different viewpoint.** *Have your child identify problem or homework assignment they are working on.* Ask them to list ALL the different possibilities for solving that problem. (This idea can work especially well with science projects). If they are reading a book, ask them to pause where they are, tell you about the story and then ask them to come up with 5 or 6 different endings or “next parts” of the story. Brainstorming in this way can help develop mental flexibility and creativity.

Emotional Health – “E”

- **Hold different feelings at the same time.** Discuss the concept of emotional flexibility in age appropriate language. Emotional flexibility means we can hold different emotions at the same time. Great example: Kids are happy to see their friends on Zoom, but sad they are not together in person. Acknowledging that you can feel both at one time and that neither feeling is “wrong” can help kids begin to identify a sense of self. ***Have your child provide you an example of where they had two feelings at the same time and praise them for developing that self-awareness.***

Spiritual Health – “S”

- 1 **Being able to see the good in all things.** Give your child the following prompt: ***“Describe a time when there was a change that you didn’t like but it ended up being great.”*** Share examples from your own life. If appropriate, discuss our current pandemic and any good that has come of it for your child, family and/or community.

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” – Mahatma Gandhi