Wellbeing at School and at Home in New Mexico

An offering to New Mexicans from the faculty and students of the Department of Individual, Family and Community Education at the University of New Mexico

September 30, 2020

Tending to our Basic Needs
We’ve passed the COVID-19 six month mark here in New Mexico. The seasons are changing. Perhaps now is a good time to look again at how we’re attending to our basics, our fundamentals. How are we doing at eating, sleeping, socializing, exercising, relationships, learning? The COVID-19 effects grant us opportunities to revisit our basic needs and how to meet them.

The New Mexico 19:
Here are 19 New Mexico resources to consider for addressing your needs.


5. Food
a. New Mexico Meal Sites for Children --


c. Here’s a list of New Mexico food banks from the New Mexico Association of Food Banks http://www.nmfoodbanks.org/.

6. Health Care coverage in New Mexico

   a. Brochure in English --

   b. Brochure en Espanol --

7. Jobs and Employment

   a. New Mexico’s Workforce Connection Online System --

   b. The New Mexico Career Development Association NMCDA offers a range of tools, including “New Mexico’s Largest Employers List.”

8. Loneliness and Depression are common right now. Here is how to be Alone Together: https://www.alonetogether.com/.

9. Mental Health

   a. NM Crisis and Access Line (NMCAL) 1-855-NMCRISIS (662-7474) or 1-855-227-5485 TTY

   b. Agora 1-866-HELP-1-NM (435-7166) - www.agoracares.org

   c. New Mexico Peer to Peer Warmline: 1-855-466-7100 (available to call 3:30pm – 11:30pm / text 6pm – 11pm)

   d. Many therapists and counselors have shifted their practices online using HIPAA compliant telehealth services. Psychologytoday.com is one place to look up a licensed clinician in your area.

   e. The New Mexico Behavioral Health Collaborative now offers a smartphone app called NMConnect which offers 24-hour crisis and non-crisis support. See https://www.newmexico.gov/2020/04/14/new-mexico-unveils-app-for-behavioral-health-support/.
10. **Public Assistance** such as cash or emergency assistance
   [https://www.yes.state.nm.us/yesnm/home/index](https://www.yes.state.nm.us/yesnm/home/index).

11. **Relationships** -- Three ways to be your best self in a relationship.

12. **Rent or Mortgage Payments** -- the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions recently hosted a webinar on renter’s rights. It is available at [www.youtube.com/user/NMDWS/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/NMDWS/videos).

13. **Safety from domestic violence and abuse**:
   b. SafeHouse [https://www.safehousenm.org/](https://www.safehousenm.org/) If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, safe house offers a wealth of resources and help! Staff is available 24/7 and the housing program offers 90 days of free lodging, alongside therapy for you and your children, as well as a children’s program, safety planning, and many others.

14. **Senior Care** -- Thursdays at 10 a.m. join Seniors Connect, a virtual gathering of New Mexico Seniors at [https://www.facebook.com/NewMexicoAging/](https://www.facebook.com/NewMexicoAging/)

15. **Sleep** -- Here are ten healthy sleep habits from the UNM Hospitals Sleep Disorders Center -- [https://hsc.unm.edu/health/patient-care/sleep-medicine/healthy-sleep-habits.html](https://hsc.unm.edu/health/patient-care/sleep-medicine/healthy-sleep-habits.html).

16. **Socializing** --

17. **Substance Abuse** -- Smoking, vaping, and drinking alcohol are coping choices some make, though with long-term consequences. Our colleagues at the UNM Center on Alcoholism, Substance Abuse, and Addictions have suggestions for how to avoid these as coping mechanisms: [https://hr.unm.edu/docs/ehp/substance-abuse-resources-covid19.pdf](https://hr.unm.edu/docs/ehp/substance-abuse-resources-covid19.pdf).

18. **Suicide Risk** -- A recent report from the Centers for Disease Control indicates that 25% of young adults have contemplated suicide. Another report notes that 41% of those surveyed recently said they were suffering adverse mental health issues during COVID-19. Call the Agora Crisis Center at 1-866-435-7166 if this is you or someone you love today. Text, chat, and other media are available also at [http://www.suicidehotlines.com/newmexico.html](http://www.suicidehotlines.com/newmexico.html).
19. A variety of assistance

a. New Mexico has an online “clearinghouse” called I Need Assistance that you can also consult.

b. For the Navajo Nation available from NavajoStrong: https://www.navajostrong.com/

Simple Pleasures:

These are our latest finds for relatively quick, easy, often healthy, things you can do during COVID-19 restrictions.

We’ve written before about the many benefits of journaling. You might find it useful in years to come to have recorded your daily impressions and experiences so that you can tell others what the pandemic was like for you. To spur you on, here’s a photo essay about what the summer was like. And KRQE has developed a Coronavirus Timeline about New Mexico’s experiences.

Do your kids need cool ZOOM background images, too? Check these out.

Were your Back to School photos this year as hilarious as these ones?

It’s a Marathon not a Sprint:

We’re on a long road to new things. Pace yourself!

Here is a list of education companies offering free subscriptions during the pandemic.

An IFCE Observation:

Cari and Glenn Hushman (Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology and Associate Professor of Physical Education Teacher Education) are former K-12 teachers who currently are supporting a kindergartener, 4th grader and 7th grader with remote schooling.

As progress reports for K-12 students are expected soon, it is a good time to reflect on our home-based schooling practices. As many can attest, the school year started in a blur of emails from schools addressing the use of new devices and software, virtual meetings with teachers describing the school day, and a never-ending stream of “It’s not accepting my password!” or “I keep getting kicked out!” statements from kids. This experience has been an odd rollercoaster
of feelings from “We’ve got this!” to “We can’t keep doing this!” As fall begins, this is an excellent time to identify what is working, acknowledge the challenges, and return to the basics of home-based schooling.

One of the gifts offered by remote schooling is the opportunity to see our kids in a different light. Children, in more normal times, spend 6-8 hours a day in their role as a student in a building outside the home. While we might get glimpses of what our kids are like as students (during homework or visits to the classroom), we rarely get to see them in this role as regularly and closely as we do now. This moment allows parents to see their students’ strengths and struggles in the classroom and potentially provide individualized support. For example, our seventh grader does not struggle with being fluent with math facts—as we had thought—but with neatness when setting up problems. Adding graph paper and a few ‘reminders’ on the importance of being neat and accurate and she is confidently raising her hand during class.

On the other hand, one of our ongoing debates is about screen time. With our kids on screens for school, how much recreational screen time is okay? There are many factors we consider such as what the kids want to do during their screen time and what have they been doing outside. Also, especially for older kids, playing virtual games with friends provides a much-needed social outlet. While not at a perfect place, we currently are trying to get the kids to print off worksheets and readings when possible, use pencil and paper for as much writing and work as possible (and then upload a picture of the writing), and equally balance playing outside with screen play.

Over the last few weeks, we have tried many things based on our teaching experiences to help our kids find success in remote schooling. Below are some basics we have learned:

- **Social Lives:** Now that school is back, kids are again feeling an impact on their social lives. While for some the lack of social interaction has allowed for space to focus on academics, most of our children are not only missing their friends but also the informal and spontaneous classroom/hallway interactions. We have found giving our kids space to express their frustration goes a long way to creating positive educational experiences.

- **Making Space:** We followed all the suggestions about making a quiet and personalized space in their rooms for learning. After the second day, though, there were struggles with isolation. We eventually moved all the worktables to the family room where they have their own space but are all in the same room. While they use their headphones for instructional times, it allows for social interaction during offline work and breaks. It also allows one of us to be close in case of technical difficulties, moral support, and reminders to focus. Sometimes the kids...
choose to work outside on nice days or in their bedrooms for more focused work. Being flexible in their workspace gives them the chance to practice regulating their learning as they match their environment to the demands of the task.

- **Regulating Learning:** Being remote is a huge opportunity to help students practice self-regulation. In our house, each kid has a printed schedule, and the older two have planners. We check their planners at the end of the day just like we did during more normal times. They choose what work needs to be done during their offline times practicing breaking down larger tasks into smaller ones with varying amounts of parental guidance. For the kindergartner, the teacher gives the schedule during the morning circle. We write the schedule and assignments down and he marks them off as he goes through the day. All of the kids have watches and can set an alarm, so they remember to come back from breaks.

- **Breaks:** Physical activity, fresh air, and sunshine help lift spirits and get the mind ready for learning. At least one break has to be spent outside with bodies moving. For our kindergartner, all of his breaks are spent moving outside. Even during online instructional times, if we see someone getting frustrated, agitated, or crying we do not hesitate to turn the camera off, take a walk outside, and let them talk. In more traditional settings, kids had meltdowns during class and the teacher would do something similar. Communicating with the teacher after the moment is over is important, though.

- **Communication:** Honest communication with teachers is very important. They are not experiencing the classroom and students in ways that they are accustomed to. They are depending on parents to let them know what is working and what is not working. At the same time, helping our kids communicate with their teachers first—before coming for our help—teaches them to advocate for what they need and is equally important as someday we will not be sitting in there. Everyone is doing their best, so we try to lead all communications with the positives but are honest when something is not working or if more support is needed.

- **Support:** This is a hard way to do school, so we have become very sensitive to negative self-talk from our kids. We try to remind them to talk to themselves as if they were talking to a friend. Reframing statements to focus on growth instead of being 'good' or 'bad' helps the goal to be on getting better every day. Using specific detailed feedback for our kids—instead of general 'good job' telling them why it's a good job—lets them know we see them. We also have a corkboard in the family room for displaying schoolwork, positive notes, and artwork as a visual reminder of success. Sometimes, we have to remember not to take the words being said personally, stay calm, and maintain a sense of humor as often the words being used are masking insecurity, boredom, and anxiety. At the end of the day, we like to remind everyone that we’ve got this!
If you’d find it helpful, here are some Back to the Basics links about COVID-19: what it is, how the disease affects us, and other information we may have lost track of in the swirl of the last six months:

- [https://explaincovid.org/about/](https://explaincovid.org/about/)

Two different Los Alamos families made two different decisions about pre-school. Relatedly, here are twenty questions to help you decide whether your children should return to the school building or not as more of us face that question -- [https://www.npr.org/2020/08/07/900106265/20-questions-to-help-decide-whats-best-for-your-kids-and-you-this-school-year](https://www.npr.org/2020/08/07/900106265/20-questions-to-help-decide-whats-best-for-your-kids-and-you-this-school-year).

**Gains and Losses:**

All of these changes!
Some are true losses big and small.
Some, though, are gains.

**An IFCE Observation:**

Heather Sands (Doctoral Candidate in Counselor Education) writes about the faint sound of crickets -- literally and figuratively -- during her last six months.

The COVID-19 and subsequent quarantine quieted various parts of our worlds. It offered an opportunity to collect, analyze, write, and defend; whereas others, like me, were left in anxious panic as our dissertations took a backseat to family and work chaos. My goal here is to narrate successes and challenges through the last seven months—highlighting this strange intersection of school, work, and family and this strange juxtaposition between quiet and chaos.

Throughout my entire life, my experience with school has been difficult. Some of the difficulty is certainly attributed to others, yet I also have a canny way of interfering with my academic successes. At one point in time, applying and enrolling in a Ph.D. program seemed more of a way to prove a point to those who said, “you can’t” or “you won’t.” Today, roughly eight years later as a Ph.D. candidate and lots of battle scars to show off, completion seems to be more of a strategic move: “what is the fastest way I can bring the finish line to me?” Filled with narratives such as, “a done dissertation is all you need” or “you’re so close, just finish,” I can attest that my
journey as a student is almost over, whether I complete it or I choose to leap off the wagon of my educational addiction.

Through the process, I’ve learned that perhaps, educational bureaucracy with all of its colors, money, and power is not the proper place for me. Will I get to write or say what I want without recourse? Will my critique and comparison of the academy to multinational corporate agendas catch up to me and sabotage my academic career? Pissing off some, while at the same time pleasing others has always been somewhat of a tug-of-war since my Bachelor’s degree at the University of New Hampshire.

The pandemic forced me to prioritize my life accordingly. After my father grew sick and near death at the beginning of April, I found myself in a position to become his conservator. Now that I have control over his body—so to speak—and his money, he is left with few decisions outside of his daily routine at his new home in an assisted living facility. Repeatedly confronted with the question, “Do you wish to be resuscitated? Circle one: Yes or No,” my dissertation became like a small dot sitting on the horizon of the desert sunset as my father’s life grew more in focus.

Meanwhile, my job as a supervisor for a local agency became more tenuous. Disagreement, like agreement, offers up a type of force to enhance or impede power and money—regardless of whether the field is hedge funds or mental health. That is all I will say on that. More relevant, my work life took a turn as I left my job to start a private practice. Thankfully, I have the love, support, and kindness from brilliant friends to get me through this career transition. It hasn’t been easy and again, my dissertation was in my periphery, but not my focal point and perhaps, I am paying the consequences of that today.

Prior to the pandemic, I opened up my research subjects from strictly New Mexico to the United States. I reached out to agencies, community organizations, and submitted two requests on the Counselor Education and Supervision national listserv. Yet, no participants. In the spirit of my own need for participants, I completed surveys for a number of doctoral candidates just trying to get by. And still, no participants. Juxtaposed with the chaos of my family and work lives, the faint sound of crickets on a summer night is a lot like the sound of my study: quiet.

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**Coping Skills:**

We need to recommit to what works and to learn new ways.

Hackers and scammers are targeting kids who are online so much with schooling right now. Here are some approaches for protecting your kids.
Create a morning routine that reduces anxiety and stress --
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/morning-routine-reduce-anxiety-stress_l_5f5fea30c5b6fd3d0527f3a7.

**An IFCE Observation**

Ryan J. Kelly (Associate Professor of Family and Child Studies (and a Father of a Two Year Old Hanging on For Dear Life)) contemplates parenting during COVID-19 from a personal and a professional perspective.

For many parents, it has been a long time, if ever, that they have spent this much time with their children. Although there are certainly upsides to this, there may also be unique challenges. I have a two year old and can relate. I have enjoyed frequently engaging in children’s activities including playing “trucks,” going on walks, building forts, reading and inventing new games, yet sometimes I feel overloaded, close to the breaking point and stressed. I commonly wonder if other parents feel the same and to what extent parenting has become more challenging. As a researcher and Associate Professor of Family and Child Studies, I have been concerned about recent scientific reports of harsh parenting (e.g., lashing out). Rates are on the rise and many children have experienced such parenting behaviors in the past six months. Let’s briefly discuss some steps parents may take to help weather the storm and to avoid lashing out. While hardly a perfect fix, perhaps some parents may find these ideas interesting.

As part of a gift to ourselves for surviving months of staying home, my wife and I recently bought a new television. Less than three days later, my child threw a toy at the screen and that was the end of our new purchase. Immediately after this happened, thoughts of *why* he threw the object impulsively flooded my mind. Was he angry? Did he do it intentionally to make us upset? Did he know how much money we just spent on it? Was he tired (after all it was close to bedtime)? Was he practicing to become a major league pitcher? As a researcher who has investigated the determinants of parenting for many years, I was well aware that the attribution I assigned to my child’s behavior would influence how I reacted.

In many studies, researchers have differentiated parents who are harsh toward their children to those who are not. When children’s misbehaviors are perceived as intentional, parents are much more likely to engage in harsh parenting tactics. For example, beliefs such as “my child tries to push my buttons” “my child is trying to make me have a bad day” and “my child thinks he/she is the boss” are predictors of harsh parenting tactics. Fortunately, most young children do not misbehave out of a desire to upset or frustrate their parents. Thus, considering other reasons that account for children’s misbehaviors is often warranted and may lead to responses that are calmer and less harsh. As for me and the television, I may have had to take some breathing exercises to prevent myself from hyperventilating, however I eventually collected myself and saw it as a teaching moment about not throwing objects inside.
Perhaps not surprisingly, parents are more likely to use harsh methods under conditions of stress. While many individuals can effectively cope with one or two stressors, the cumulative effect of multiple stressors is likely to take its toll and result in reactive aggression (e.g., aggression stemming from frustration). This is particularly relevant now, given the number of stressors that have accompanied COVID including worries about health, school/daycare closures and navigating the work day while concurrently taking care of children. Research has identified multiple methods that can be used to help reduce the impact that cumulative stress has on parenting. Multiple investigations have found that sufficient and high quality sleep reduces the extent to which stress predicts aggression. In case you’re interested, the National Sleep Foundation currently recommends that adults devote 7 to 9 hours to sleep per night and that sleep schedules should be consistent. Further, daily exercise and engaging in activities with friends/family to receive peer support has been shown to help cope with stressful environments and in turn improve parents’ interactions with their children. Lastly, scheduling “me time” daily, even if only for 15 to 30 minutes, helps cope with stressful environments. Although not applicable to every family, in some cases a spouse may be able to cover parenting duties while their partner goes for a walk, picks up a cup of coffee or watches the sun set in our beautiful state.

Although my family is hardly the perfect model in regard to how to handle the stressors associated with COVID, we try to devote 9 hours to sleep per night (although we can live with 8 hours), exercise for at least 60 minutes each day (but we are happy if we just hit 30 min!) and I am no stranger to sticking my head over the backyard fence to discuss fun topics with my neighbor including movies, sports and ways to grow vegetation in the desert. I also find a lot of joy in seeing my students over Zoom three days week. Overall, these are just some examples and perhaps reading about them may give you some ideas about different ways to weather the storm and balance the parenting role during COVID.

These basic behaviors remain critical for us all to do:
- **Wash your hands** often. ([Make sure your kids do, too.](#))
- **Wear your mask.**
- **Physically distance.**
- **Stay home** if you’re sick or exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Get your **flu shot** now.
Conflict Resolution:

All of our relationships take extra attention right now. Conflict, unfortunately, happens easily.

An IFCE Observation

Ashley Martin-Cuellar (Visiting Lecturer in Family and Child Studies, and Marriage and Family Therapist) offers a few thoughts on navigating financial conversations.

Finances are a huge stressor for most families right now as we are many months into the pandemic: job loss, cutbacks, the purchase of more food, and anxiety due to the many unknowns with the economy. Finances are already one of the top stressors for couples and oftentimes the source of many conflicts. Most conflicts arise out of misinterpretation and miscommunication; money conflict is no different. Spending, saving, budgeting, all reflect personal values and reflect messages and experiences from our family of origin. When money values and/or priorities are misaligned or not discussed, conflict ensues. During this time of uncertainty, couples may find it helpful to have proactive conversations about their finances and budget, along with fears and anxieties they may have surrounding all the unknowns. Having proactive conversations about money, provides prospective to one another as budgets continue to shift and to minimize future conflicts. Perspective can provide understanding. Here are a few guiding questions/sharing prompts to begin these conversations:

- Share a story with your partner to help him/her understand your view about money.
- What images from childhood influenced your monetary beliefs?
- Share a memorable experience from childhood with your partner to help him/her understand your concerns about money.
- Share a memorable experience from adulthood with your partner to help him/her understand your concerns about money.
- Share your biggest fear regarding money.
- Share any hurts that may come into play when you bring up money or finances.
- What did you learn about money from your parents/family of origin?
- What messages did you hear about money while growing up? How have these messages impacted the way you view money? Or the way you spend money?
- What would be helpful in calming your anxieties about money? Is there an amount of money that would help you feel secure?
- What are your financial goals? What do you hope to save for individually? What do you hope to save for as a couple?

Embedded in these conversations are meanings made about money: status, security, power, love, giving, freedom, vulnerability, etc... Try to understand where your partner is coming from as you navigate future purchases and budgeting decisions. Budgeting and related
decision-making is about navigating and discussing needs/wants, managing and balancing financial resources to meet needs/wants, all within the context of each person’s meanings made, their values and beliefs.

CNBC article about budgeting during the pandemic: 

For Those in the Helping Professions:

The blog *Subtle Maneuvers* has been featuring how various artists and creative professionals have been navigating pandemic life. *Here’s an entry about painter Susan Chen.*

Here are some ZOOM hacks and tips for teachers and students: 

The Bookshelf -- References and Other Resources

Things the WASH NM Team has read or seen that you might want to examine more closely


Coming up Next:
The Masks We Wear (October 14) -- Masks, scary things, facing our fears: Halloween is awesomely frightful fun! And yet, the COVID-19 pandemic has us wearing masks, dealing with lots of scary things, and needing to face earnest fears. In our October issue, we’ll have some tricks-and-treats while also talking about ways in which we hide and ways in which we can face the scarier sides of the pandemic.

About WASH NM:
The faculty and students of the Department of *Individual, Family and Community Education* in the *College of Education and Human Sciences* at the *University of New Mexico* would like to offer to *all New Mexicans* thoughts, ideas, and resources from ourselves and our areas of study and work -- counseling, educational psychology, family & child studies, and nutrition -- to enlighten, soften, and aid the COVID-19-related transitions. We intend to make this offering monthly, each with a theme relevant to our times.

We are months in to the Coronavirus effects on our lives, and we are realizing that we face not a pause in our realities to which we will soon spring back but a new reality entirely. We held our
breath, put our collective and individual heads down, and gutted it out so far. Now, we face the marathon, not a sprint, of placing ourselves, our children and families, our work selves -- everything -- into this new normal. In these changes, we owe ourselves and those around us opportunities to note and to grieve the losses, big and small, and we also owe it to ourselves and others opportunities to see and seize and solidify the gains. Some of these changes have been good! We've (re)discovered simple pleasures like baking, walks, family meals, reading, laughing together. Some of the changes have been among the hardest we've faced. We're in need of new and better coping skills, and, with tensions running high, we need new and better conflict resolution strategies, too. Even simple interactions aren’t simple these days! With informed reflection and action throughout this time, we can all improve our Wellbeing at School and at Home in New Mexico.

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How to Pick Up the WASH NM:
All issues of WASH NM are available in pdf format at:
http://coehs.unm.edu/departments-programs/ifce/wash-nm.html

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About the Department of Individual, Family and Community Education:
The department houses four diverse, but interconnected, programs that prepare students to address the myriad issues faced by the State of New Mexico. Our faculty members are
leaders in their disciplines of Counselor Education, Educational Psychology, Family and Child Studies, and Nutrition; although each of these programs reflect different professional fields and identities, we all have shared values of human development, diversity, and excellence in scholarship and teaching. We offer various Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctoral Degrees and a number of programs have achieved national accreditations in their fields, a true marker of success and innovation.

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