January 2021: Elders

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.
Elders

We start the New Year with reflections on our Wise Ones, on wisdom, on our elders, and our extended families. How do our elders contribute to our wellbeing and we to theirs? What wisdom can we draw upon during this time? How can we be in our extended families when gathering is problematic?
Talking with Kids about the Capitol Hill Riot

Our elders transmit their wisdom and experiences through stories. We cherish and learn from their telling of their own impressions and experiences of events of their lifetime: World War II; the good times of the ‘50s, the ‘80s, the ‘90s; 9/11. When our children’s grandchildren ask them about events from their youth, what will they say about these times we’re living in? Here are some resources for talking with them about current events:

**How to talk to kids about scary news:** [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-to-talk-kids-scary-news_l_5ff62e64c5b64e568bf3b44a?ncid=NEWSTAND0001](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-to-talk-kids-scary-news_l_5ff62e64c5b64e568bf3b44a?ncid=NEWSTAND0001)


**Don’t shy away from talking to kids about the Capitol riot. They know more than you think:** [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2021/01/07/kids-capitol-riot-parenting-tips/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2021/01/07/kids-capitol-riot-parenting-tips/)


**How to talk to children about the Capitol riots: An age by age guide:** [https://www.today.com/parents/how-talk-children-about-capitol-riots-age-age-t205304](https://www.today.com/parents/how-talk-children-about-capitol-riots-age-age-t205304)

Simple Pleasures

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

The Institute for American Indian Arts Museum of Contemporary Native Arts in Santa Fe has launched a phone app that provides virtual tours of the museum among other features.

Inspiring stories of seniors who are making an impact during the pandemic.
As a child, I had the privilege of being surrounded by elders. Growing up, my cousins and I would sit around the table at my grandmother’s house and ask our elders to tell us stories. We were mesmerized as they told us stories about their childhood. My grandmother used to say, “We didn’t grow up with a lot of money, but we grew up with a lot of love.” The unconditional love our elders gave us was a constant in our lives. They taught us to love others, to be kind, and to be grateful for everything we had.

An elder is one who has lived, experienced life, and shown resiliency through life’s hardships. Many of our elders have survived poverty, oppression, and illnesses. If familiar elders are not in close proximity, you can visit or volunteer at your local senior centers. Fostering meaningful relationships can enrich all of our lives in many ways. We learn from their own life lessons and make better decisions in regards to raising our families and making our life decisions.

My grandmothers gave me such wonderful advice when I was pregnant and having my babies. My paternal grandmother encouraged me to sing to my babies and talk to them when they were in my belly. She would remind me that the baby could hear me and feel all my emotions. She raised fifteen children and always gave us the best advice. I still told her advice close to my heart. She reminded me to talk to my boys and spend time with them. She said, “There will always be dishes; Your boys will not always be young.” Her words of wisdom ring true more now than ever, my boys are growing up so quickly.

I read several books when I was preparing to be a mom. So much of the advice and wisdom my grandmother gave me was also in the books I read. I wish I could tell her how science has now proven she was right. It is about being present and in the moment with our children while they are young and still live with us.

Young children gain so many skills and receive so much love from elders. Many preschools around the county have programs that bring older mentors to share time with four year-olds. The children are learning ways to socialize, listen, smile, and feel genuine love and respect from their elders. Young children and seniors benefit from these programs. Studies have shown a reciprocal positive impact for both the children and elder mentors participating in these programs.

There are so many benefits from growing up with elders. For example, they can pass down heritage. Our elders are part of our family, and they can share traditions and ideals that have been integral to our family’s history and that shape our own personal identity. Growing up in a Latino and Native family, I developed a deep sense of cultural pride that can be seen in my confidence and self-worth. Elders can help carry on cultural traditions to our children. If you are fortunate enough to live near your elders, spend time with them. Learn from them and listen deeply. Give your children the gift of learning from their elders.

Here is a list of just some of the things young children can learn from their elders...

1. Unconditional love
2. Laughter makes us happy
3. Traditions
4. Courage in the face of adversity
5. Honesty is the best policy
6. Life Skills
My grandmother and our son Keon. She loved him since she found out I was expecting. She sat in the delivery room with me all night long and sang songs and prayed for me. She loved her great grandchildren so much.

My daddy “Rick” along with My husband Casimir, our sons Curtis and Darrion with the “Sun” to our solar system. Our grandmother’s love moved mountains and she made each of us feel so special. We will carry all her love and advice close to our hearts always.

My beloved grandmother “Chee” who is from Isleta New Mexico along with my aunt Jane, and niece Savanna celebrating our youngest nephews Birthday. We will cherish these memories and continue to talk about them to carry them on through generations.

Janelle shared photos of the cross-generational relationships, forged by the elders in her life.
New Year, New Name:

We’re changing the name of this section, which used to be It’s a Marathon, not a Sprint. In June, we knew the pandemic would be affecting us for longer than we thought. We had no idea that we’d still be saying that in 2021. Maybe navigating this pandemic is not a marathon? Even an ultramarathon has a finish line, a time when the exertions end.

Teleoanticipation is approaching the race with the finish line in mind. The way this pandemic and its many effects are digging deep into our lives, perhaps there won’t be a finish line. Perhaps there won’t be a single day when we know it is over. Yet we still need to keep going. How do we do that without a finish line? What other mindsets are available to us? One tip: Don’t ask “Can I finish?”, ask “Can I keep going?” Another tip: create a Creative Loop for yourself. Regardless of your approach, Keep on Keeping On!
As I gave my early morning offering to the Holy People at the first light of the New Year, I began to fully appreciate the darkness that we have all walked through the previous year. For many Americans, 2020 will be remembered as one of the most troublesome eras of humanity. For First Nation communities, including my own Diné Nation, it will be remembered as the year we struggled to protect our knowledge and language keepers. Our senior population became the target of COVID-19. Social distancing and isolation became our weapons to save them during this pandemic.

Protecting the sacred means many things in Indigenous cultures. This year it means that our communities are being endangered by the COVID-19 virus, as cases continue to rise throughout Native America (Young, n.d.). It is an initiative to come together to protect what is sacred to our people: our elders, our languages, our medicine ways, and our cultures. Normally Diné communities are built of relationships, relatedness, and interconnection. However, we were forced to step back and adjust to new guidelines. In place of normal physical social ties, the pandemic has isolated us to a place where hugs have become weapons, and not visiting became an act of love (Rashid, 2019).

Grandparents in Diné culture are dispensers of wisdom, so when grandchildren are born they become the caregivers and sources of knowledge. Grandparents act as the culture conservator of the family, teaching in our languages to ensure that children learn the cultural traditions in the way that it has been practiced by previous generations. I am reminded as I write, of my mother talking in our mother tongue to my newborn son. She works to solidify familial bonds, to begin establishing our way of being to baby, who in our culture is considered to be between our physical and spiritual world. It is through our language that connects us to everything around us.

It is common knowledge among Indigenous Peoples worldwide that we are surrounded by sentient beings, who understand us through our languages and offerings to the Holy People, who are the seasons, the weather, the plants and animals, and to all that surrounds us. It is through our languages that help us navigate our way when we walk between our two worlds. Embedded is an understanding that cannot be interpreted because it has to be felt. As our elders, our language keepers diminish, so does the knowledge and wisdom that is available to us.

Our seniors in our communities hold the key to Indigenous epistemology which is knowledge that is not frozen in time, it adapts to reflect the changes occurring within Indigenous communities. It is always evolving and familiar and culturally relevant to its environment. Indigenous knowledge shared by our elders is a way of knowing and being, which is uniquely articulated by each tribal community. It is through our stories of Creation, which are as diverse as the people themselves, are thoughtful and implanted with lessons that center us so that knowledge is understandable through demonstration and observation. Telling the story of our life journey means tracing our footsteps through the people, events, and places that have formed us (Cajete, 2015). As children, we begin learning about Creation stories and the relatedness of all life.

In my culture, oral storytelling is innate and inherent, it is the traditional means of interpreting the thought process of our peoples’ worldview and contributes to the transmission of information. Rooted in our stories include identity, strength, character, morality, and resiliency. It is through storytelling that enables us to find identity in the present to better navigate the future through our connection with the past (TEDxOUA, 2017). That resonates because of our constant reflection on past experiences and the sharing of wisdom that we learn from others' life experiences. This cultural lens forms the basis of how
we think, how we live, who we are, how we interact with others, and how we see the world. These ideas and ways of being, supports community and its wellbeing.

Communities in Indigenous perspectives include the whole environment, the sun, the moon, the stars, the plants, and the animals, and all things that our Mother Earth provides. Communities help develop genuine relationships between their environments and science. It is through this interconnectedness that promotes a new way of looking at the world because it is always changing and evolving, developing various scaffolding techniques which we use to move progressively towards a stronger understanding and greater independence in the learning process, providing sustainability and wellbeing in our communities.

One example I can think of is the story about rain, rain is essential for growing plants which in turn feed many animals, all of which contribute to the water cycle. In the Southwest, it is important for rain to fall each year to provide food. The lack of precipitation during a drought causes many Pueblo tribes in New Mexico to hold ceremonies and pray for an abundance of rain. However, in Diné culture, the Navajo concept of hózhó means to live in balance and in harmony with all things, which means to make the most of all that surrounds us. When we apply this concept to the lack of precipitation, in Diné culture, instead of praying for rain, we learn to adapt to its absence, gaining a unique knowledge of the environment to survive in an unforgiving climate. Without that understanding, Diné people would perish.

As Indigenous Peoples, we are unique in our understanding of the thought process which helps us to thrive in our environments. It is reinventing ourselves to survive atrocities brought on by colonization and the Western concept of education. At the same time, it is never giving up the sense of responsibility to one another and the land. This concept maintains the interdependent relationship to sustain the future.

The wisdom shared by our grandparents’ means living and learning from our life experiences. Each time we experience making choices in our life we learn something from it. Sometimes we do not understand what the lessons are teaching us until we turn around and look back at it in hindsight. We need to circle back to grasp the meanings of our choices. When thinking of someone wise, I think about people who are open-minded and influential with the thoughts that they share. They understand different perspectives, they are non-judgmental, and they just listen. They are our grandmas and grandpas, who are our teachers who continually remind us to be happy we are Diné.

Finally, in our Diné culture, we know darkness as Chahałheeł, it is a time of healing, a time of rejuvenation, and a time of sleep. Chahałheeł is our grandmother who cradles us and takes care of us. It is a time when many of our ceremonies are taking place in relationship with the healing power of Chahałheeł. 2020 became this dark time for all of us, clouded with anguish, fear, and uncertainty, but like our grandmother’s teachings, it is also a time to press forward, to keep in mind hope which is oftentimes absent during crisis.

Using our stories and history as armor, we need to continue to promote the efforts of all Indigenous Peoples to establish a collective efficacy during this pandemic for food, shelter, water, education for our children, and protection for our elderly. This will reflect the high expectations and success demonstrated by our ancestors which encourages resiliency. These difficult challenges today and in history inspire Indigenous Peoples to approach this hardship with the same intensified persistence and strong resolve that is already integrated within our culture. We are proud to still be here, in existence, and we will survive again.

Editors note: Here are stories about the Covid losses of Navajo elders:

- https://nyti.ms/2LCCZER
Gains and Losses

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

The wisdom of our elders comes from long experience. Here are some ideas for learning from our elders’ wisdom during this pandemic as well as cultivating our own experiences for that day when we ourselves are the elders:

- **Listening to your elders** is good for them and good for you!
- **Write down your experiences** now because if you’re not an elder now, you will be some day.
- **Being a Family Caregiver during the pandemic can be a gift.**
- **The everyday can become a monument to things we have lost and things we have found during the pandemic.**

In 2020, I had the opportunity to study and learn more about aging populations. Older and aging people face unique obstacles and challenges. However, many of these challenges have been exacerbated by the current pandemic. Covid-19 has impacted support systems, living conditions, and how older populations receive care. Aging individuals need support from a diverse and multidisciplinary array of professionals. Unfortunately, the spread of Covid-19 has limited access to home health services, hospice care, nursing homes, as well as general medical care. Also, due to social distancing, older individuals are unable to see their loved ones or have as much social interaction, which can negatively impact their mental wellbeing. Understanding the needs and development of older populations can help professionals better support aging individuals’ development, autonomy, and overall well-being.

Reading *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom was one of the best ways to learn about aging, death, and dying. Mitch Albom’s memoir was engaging and it covered many topics that older individuals and their families can relate to. Albom’s book provided insights into the life of Morrie Schwartz as he navigated adulthood, aging, and eventually dying. It is one thing to read about the struggles of getting older, but it is another to be able to understand how an individual is feeling in the moment and to empathize with them. The book addresses important topics such as struggles aging populations face, caring for adults at the end of life, materialism, and finally the meaning of life.

As Morrie aged, he began to suffer from Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). ALS affects the brain, nerves, and muscle control and was an additional obstacle for Morrie as he navigated old age. In the book, ALS is described, “ALS is like a lit candle: it melts your nerves and leaves your body a pile of wax... By the end, if you are still alive, you are breathing through
a hole in your throat, while your soul, perfectly awake, is imprisoned inside a limp husk, perhaps able to blink, or cluck a tongue, like something from a science fiction movie, the man frozen inside his own flesh.” (Albom, 1997, p. 9-10) Also, comorbidities can make living with ALS or other ailments much more difficult. Morrie was able to make the most of his time by meeting with friends and family. Unfortunately, many individuals will not be able to see loved ones until the Covid-19 virus is better controlled.

Another issue Morrie faced was becoming totally dependent on others for care. He discusses his trepidation about becoming unable to wipe himself after using the restroom. However, he said that he was trying to enjoy the process because he only gets “to be a baby one more time.” (Albom, 1997, p. 49) I had never heard a perspective like this before. Morrie knew that dependency was an inevitable part of his aging and dying and decided to embrace it. I wish this was how the general population viewed dependency in the elderly. Being old is stigmatized and stereotyped harshly in our society but there is no need for it to be this way. Older individuals should not need to feel anxious, worried, or embarrassed about things that are out of their control. I think Morrie puts it best saying, “Take my condition. The things I am supposed to be embarrassed about now- not being able to walk, not being able to wipe my ass, waking up some mornings wanting to cry- there is nothing innately embarrassing or shaming about them.” (Albom, 1997, p. 155) The fact that these things are seen as taboo or shameful shows that there needs to be a societal shift in how we view and treat our elderly populations. With the closures and outbreaks in care facilities, some older individuals may have transitioned to at home care. Many families may be taking more hands-on care for their older family members during the pandemic. This is why it is so important to educate all individuals on adult development and dispel myths about older individuals.

Studying older populations and reading Tuesdays with Morrie introduced me to the unique challenges that come with aging and dying. I have a greater appreciation for older generations, and I am interested in researching and working with older adults. As for my own aging, I feel much better about getting older and all the changes that come with aging. My body may change and deteriorate but I am okay with that. I can take preventative measures to help ease the transition to old age and I can work to age successfully. Thinking about aging and death helps me prioritize what is important in my life. I think I am now more mindful in my day-to-day life to make time for what matters. Loving others, helping the community, and doing activities that give life meaning are essential to living a successful and fulfilling life. Covid-19 has definitely impacted how I see my family, friends, and activities. Living through a pandemic has made me see how I took many important things for granted, and I should have appreciated them more when I had the chance. Once life returns to normal, I definitely will be making more time to spend with my loved ones and doing work that is meaningful to me. Hopefully by using what I have learned and making changes in my own life, I will age successfully and have minimal regrets.

[Editor’s Note: Tuesdays with Morrie sparked a movie, a podcast, and several other books by Mitch Albom. More info about all of them are at https://www.mitchalbom.com/books/tuesdays-with-morrie/]
Throughout the lifespan, humans continue to grow and develop. They are social from the start, and neurologically more resilient and pliable than experts once believed. Our growing understanding of brain plasticity has given rise to new ways to address the adverse effects of brain injuries and trauma, and called into question outdated beliefs in the inevitability of severe cognitive decline in old age. One of the great leaps forward in the psychological sciences in recent years is the insight that elderly brains are capable of growing new connections under the right conditions. Research on the aging process shows that genes and biology play a part in brain health and function in old age. Yet these “inborn” factors only account for part of the story. Contextual and behavioral factors, things over which we potentially have some control, also play a role and offer promising possibilities for prevention and treatment (Boyle, 2017; Gupta, 2021; Levitin, 2020; Valenzuela, 2015).

Self-talk – the ongoing conversation we have with ourselves – affects motivation and well-being at every age. The attributions we make in response to cognitive glitches can foster resiliency, or undermine self-confidence and social engagement. The explanations we offer for even routine delays in retrieving (recalling) information from memory can reinforce erroneous, yet widely held assumptions about the aging brain. Thad Polk (2016) suggested that we might do better to think of the changes associated with cognitive aging as “transformation rather than as deterioration.” My best advice is for everyone to monitor their self-talk, and to focus on what credible researchers have to say about cognitive aging and brain health.

There are a number of cognitive changes associated with aging. As time goes by, adults may have more difficulty focusing their attention and are more easily distracted by extraneous stimuli. Performance on divided attention tasks declines with age. Multitasking is said to be more difficult for older adults, but research suggests that, when it comes to task performance, no one is good at multitasking! The speed at which one processes information slows down. Slower processing speed results in decreases in working memory span, which affects performance on various cognitive tasks. Crystalized processing, which is related to life experiences and prior learning, remains steady and can potentially increase throughout the lifespan. Fluid processing, which involves processing speed, working memory and the ability to solve novel problems that do not rely very much on prior knowledge, decreases over time. The difference in performance on cognitive tasks between younger and older adults increases over time (Kuther, 2020). Yet some of the differences between older and younger adults are relatively small and may vanish when experimental designs are modified in ways that make them more senior friendly (Levitin, 2020). Processing speed and retrieval can be adversely affected by stress, illness, medications, dehydration, sleep deprivation, sensory impairments, unfamiliarity with the task, motivation, and even by the time of day at which testing is scheduled (Levitin, 2020). As a general rule, older people need more time to get the (cognitive) job done.

There is little question that it can take oldsters longer than younger folks to retrieve words and formulate thoughts into sentences. Yet referring to all retrieval delays as “senior moments” stigmatizes a natural phenomenon experienced by adults of all ages. Many adults fret that the cognitive changes they experience are signs of impending neurocognitive disorders (Alzheimer’s Disease, Vascular or Lewy Body Dementia). Given this frightening prospect, we may be more prone to notice retrieval glitches as we grow older. But cognitive aging and neurocognitive disorders are not synonymous. Forgetting what you were about to do does not necessarily signal deteriorating health, it may simply be a byproduct of the fact that, “for every decade after our fortieth birthday, our brains spend more time contemplating our own thoughts versus taking in information from the external environment” (Levitin, 2020, p. 31). As we all fight to survive a global pandemic, it seems best to invest time and energy in lifestyle changes that are known to foster successful aging – many of which have been
identified in previous issues of this ‘zine. The Dana Foundation (dana.org) has developed a 
brief, informative PSA on “Successful Aging and Your Brain” and provides access to a wealth 
of valuable information online.

Every once in a while, when in the Zoom-mediated company of others or on my own, I say 
“I'm old” in a whimsical way, as if to remind myself it is so. I do not feel any different than I 
did twenty years ago. If anything, I feel better! Yet it seems important to be mindful of how 
others see me, and to assure them that I am trying to balance the need to stay current and 
competent with the fact that I am from another time, with all that this implies. Levitin (2020) observed that

“From a neurological standpoint, wisdom is the ability to see patterns where others 
don’t see them, to extract generalized common points from prior experience, and 
use those to make predictions about what is likely next. Oldsters aren’t as fast, 
perhaps, at mental calculations and retrieving names, but they are much better and 
faster at seeing the big picture. And that comes down to decades of generalization 
and abstraction.” (p. 37)

In the spirit of WASH NM, aging well is a matter of acknowledging and embracing gains and 
losses. Older adulthood brings more gains than one might expect.

References and Links

• Dana Foundation (2020). Successful Aging and Your Brain PSA. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qO3QlGC-nOl
• Gupta, Sanjay (2021). Sanjay Gupta’s prescription for fighting off dementia. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PC0k0oidbyA
• Kuther, Tara (2020). Lifespan Development: Lives in Context, 2e. SAGE.
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Care in the COVID Era

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

How to care for older people during the pandemic (with a printable guide!)

Do Norwegians have a tip for surviving winter isolation?

Perhaps getting a pet would help with the isolation?

Here are some tips for how to have tough conversations about COVID-19.

How high school students create care packages for elders.

9 Ways to bring Joy and Care to Older People in the Pandemic.
What are your earliest images of old age?

Mine are of time spent with my grandparents, Hazel and Alton Armstrong. My happiest days in childhood might well have been spent on weekend escapes to their house on Elliot Avenue in Minneapolis, a place so different from our home in the suburbs. Everything was different in the city, indoors and out -- sounds, smells, sights, the texture of everyday life, and I just loved spending time in this exotic place. I remember watching my grandfather plant flowers along the side of the house and I wonder now if this was where I first learned to love gardening (one of my favorite avocations still). I remember playing games with my grandmother, and watching her play solitaire, and all of the conversations we had wherein she talked with me as though we were equals, which is my grownup way of saying what my young mind experienced: engaging with an adult who offered unconditional positive regard and a genuine interest in what I had to say. Perhaps all the days and weeks spent at my grandparents’ house explain why, aside from home, my favorite place is somewhere else.

At my grandparents house, I baked! I have few memories of baking at home with my parents, but many happy memories of baking in my grandparents’ pink ceramic tiled kitchen. I sometimes watched my grandmother cook, but my greatest culinary adventures were when I baked things all by myself with a host of miniature cooking implements and a wondrous selection of miniature packages of baking mixes. It was truly a glorious thing -- being able to mix up a tiny batch of brownies, cookies, cakes with frosting, and to choose what I would make. When I was a little older, my grandparents gave me Betty Crocker’s Cookbook for Boys and Girls (1957). This little spiral bound book opened up a new world of culinary delight. It gave me the power to make delicious things all on my own, yet under watchful grownup eyes.

But what about wisdom? Are elders somehow naturally wiser than younger folks? Were my grandparents wise? Perhaps. As always, this depends on how one defines and measures the construct. Elders often share their knowledge and wisdom through story-telling, and I remember hearing stories of the hard times of the Depression, and how gardening back then meant survival, not recreation. And with tales of the Depression came awareness that things have not always been as they are, and might well not be so in the future, and that we are all subject to wider forces beyond our control. They told stories of capable people whose hopes and dreams were crushed by the Depression.

My grandmother was fond of telling stories about how she defied convention in her youth and young womanhood. She told of sneaking out of the house early in the morning to go sledging on a Sunday, when everyone was supposed to stay indoors and be still all day, and then lying about it and trying to place the blame on her brother, to no avail. How I loved her stories of defying convention and resisting the status quo! I also loved hearing tales of my father’s boyhood transgressions, but that is a tale for another time. My grandparents conveyed to me a wider view of the social realm, while allowing me to develop and practice useful, culturally-valued skills. Paradoxically, while visiting my grandparents’ house, I acquired conventional, gender stereotypical skills and consumerist desires through play (baking) while being captivated by stories celebrating non-conformity. There could be no greater fun than defying the social order, or so it was made to appear. But what about wisdom?

I remember my grandmother telling me that when she was a much younger woman, she watched a neighbor who lived down the street vigorously sweeping and scrubbing the steps outside her front door. She did this fastidiously every day without fail. My grandmother mused that she used to think her neighbor’s behavior was ridiculous and she joked about it back then. “But now,” she said, “I see things differently and I don’t think she was so silly after all.” She never explained the reason for her change of heart, and my child’s mind
probably would not have understood had she done so. For some reason, that story has stayed with me through the years, and I have pondered it from time to time. What strikes me now is that it was not so much the explicit content of the exchange that mattered, but the implicit lessons conveyed about the nature of aging and adult life: that being a grown up might involve questioning one's assumptions, accepting one's fallibility, and seeing things anew. ("I was once thus, but now I am otherwise. I see things in a different way now than before.") Adulthood was not an endpoint, but a journey that could lead to transformation and personal growth -- to changing one's mind! This is a capacity needed for adaptation to the ever-changing cultural landscape of contemporary life.

With respect to wisdom, my grandmother took time to converse with a child about abstract ideas and insights she had gained through reflection. The content might have been about relationships and social perceptions, or spiritual beliefs and practices, or philosophical values and actions -- what seems most important is that the conversations occurred. Wisdom is not a trait, but a transaction. Children listen to elders, try to understand, and sometimes remember.


What’s Next?

Family Love -- February 17 -- We love our extended families, those we are born in to and those we choose. Families are sources of love, support, and resources always and particularly now. Grandparents watch grandchildren. Adults check in on older parents. Siblings stay in touch. The pandemic has also added stresses and hard decisions within our family networks. Who is in our “bubble”? How do we honor birthdays, anniversaries, and deaths? Love brings it all together.
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. With informed reflection and action throughout this time, we can all improve our Wellbeing at School and at Home in New Mexico.

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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Marquita Nez, FCS Student
Holly Mayer, FCS Graduate Student
Janelle Garcia Cole, Family Development Program

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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