Wellbeing at School and at Home in New Mexico

WASH NM

September 2, 2020

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

Take Care of Yourself: The Pumpkin Spice Issue

The aroma of green chile roasting in supermarket parking lots will quickly give way to the scent of pumpkin spice not only in our coffee but in lots of other places, too. We invite you to use these powerful sensations to remind you to take very good care of yourself. We’ve been COVIDing now for almost six months. We’re going to be COVIDing for a while yet. We need to make sure we are staying healthy -- mentally and physically. In this issue, we look at self-care for us all:

- What is mindfulness?
- Eat pumpkin mindfully.
- Meditate over a pumpkin-spiced latte.
- Watch out for screen and seat time!
- 19 Mindfulness resources

Remember to enjoy the simple pleasures; to note the gains and losses; to help yourself and others by honing your conflict management and coping skills. After all, we are all running a marathon, not a sprint.

Celebrating Women and Women’s Right to Vote

We just recently observed the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment to the US Constitution guaranteeing women the right to vote. Here are some resources and some ways to mark the occasion.

- VOTE this November:
  - To register to vote in New Mexico: https://portal.sos.state.nm.us/OVR/WebPages/InstructionsStep1.aspx
  - To request a mail-in ballot:
To check your voter registration status and your polling place:
https://www.sos.state.nm.us/voting-and-elections/voter-information-portal/

For all of the above, you can also call the NM Secretary of State at 505-827-3600.

- Advancing Opportunities for New Mexican Women and Girls:
  https://newmexicowomen.org/

- New Mexico’s Women of the Century:

- Listen to an album of music from some of America’s earliest female composers:

- Watch the movie Radioactive on Amazon Prime about the scientist Marie Curie. Here’s an interview with the actor who played her in the film:

- Let’s make sure COVID-19 doesn’t set women back:

**Simple Pleasures:**

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

Here is a collection of photos from New Mexico recently featured in *The Atlantic*:

“Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo Nation” begins September 7, virtually.
https://www.indianz.com/covid19/?p=7966

Got any worries to hand to Old Man Gloom? No need to be physically in Santa Fe this year; Zozobra will be broadcast statewide: https://burnzozobra.com/

Taking time to write in a journal, particularly as a way to express and understand emotions, is a powerful form of self-care. In this article, Kira M. Newman describes the benefits of journaling in difficult times and examines some of the research on the underlying mechanisms that produce these benefits. She also offers useful strategies for how to get started, as well as some important “dos and don’ts” for journal writing:
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_journaling_can_help_you_in_hard_times
An IFCE Observation:

Kelley Holladay (Assistant Professor of Counselor Education, and Licensed Mental Health Counselor) offers us some pumpkin themed meals for some mindful eating practices.

Are travel plans cancelled this season? Do we need a way to bring some fall holidays to entertain any children? In the counseling realm, one of the first things we talk about in class are the terms empathy (to understand someone) versus sympathy (feeling sorry for). If we do not take care of ourselves initially, we may not be as helpful when practicing empathy while caring for those around us. Essentially, as individuals, family members, community members, and workers, it’s as though we put on the oxygen mask first, so that we can help those around us put their mask on as well. Mindfulness is one of several ways we can practice this crucial personal care.

This brings me to the fall season, with a few festive ideas, along with mindful eating. Food is a big part of our culture and can bring back an old memory. When I think of the fall season, I think of Georgia Mountains, apple farms, and my grandmother’s homemade pies (that she always made from scratch).

As so many celebrate apart this year, we may still keep some traditions alive. Rituals are restorative, where the purpose is to transform us. Rituals occur in various forms across cultures and are a journey (see Wildtree) with a beginning, middle, and end. “Keeping rituals and holidays special will create distinction from one day to the next, and help bolster morale for yourself and your loved ones” (see Veranda). To keep some fall rituals alive this season, wear your favorite outfit, dress up your table, play music, and bring out some old pictures for storytelling. Incorporate children into creating these meals as well. Here are some neat ideas regarding pumpkin themed events and meals!

Pumpkin themed meals: Want to plan an entire pumpkin themed meal?

   Cinderella Pumpkin bowl [here](#)
   47 different way to eat pumpkin [here](#)

Get the party ready with some of these ideas:

   For some decorating ideas, see this [Veranda link](#)
   Pumpkin Patch Party for Kids [here](#)

Mindful eating: Great to practice with loved ones, and when dining alone this fall season:

   “Mindful eating is very pleasant. We sit beautifully. We are aware of the people surrounding us. We are aware of the food on our plates. This is a deep practice” (Thich Nhat Hanh). Some of the benefits include: reduced stress, enjoying the moment, more awareness, self-acceptance,
gratitude, and it has been shown as a treatment for eating disorders. Maybe you are eating with loved ones, or for health reasons maybe you are eating alone. Keep your rituals present, and bring awareness to your meals this fall season, as this too shall pass.

The center for mindful eating offers: The principles of mindful eating [here](#)

6 ways to practice mindful eating [here](#)

Some meditations from Thich Nhat Hanh [here](#)

Mindful Eating: The Art of Presence While You Eat (Nelson, 2017) [here](#)

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**It’s a Marathon not a Sprint:**

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

Are you or someone you know struggling with basic needs? Here’re some places that could help:

- **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](#).

- Helpline (1−844-762-8483) and other resources to address Domestic Violence among Native Americans: [https://www.strongheartshelpline.org/](https://www.strongheartshelpline.org/). Domestic Violence help for anyone is available via the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE(7233).

- **Loneliness and depression** are common right now. Here is how to be Alone Together: [https://www.alonetogether.com/](https://www.alonetogether.com/).

- 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).

- **COVID-19 survivors’ support group:** [https://www.facebook.com/groups/COVID19survivorcorps/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/COVID19survivorcorps/).

- **School Clothes** on the Navajo Nation: [https://www.nndsr.navajo-nsn.gov/?fbclid=IwAR2KpwkHFgo5MBm5NIBM-ZlDSObbQU0Alr1YespDNHo-ellvZY9GTFyLZqA](https://www.nndsr.navajo-nsn.gov/?fbclid=IwAR2KpwkHFgo5MBm5NIBM-ZlDSObbQU0Alr1YespDNHo-ellvZY9GTFyLZqA).
A variety of assistance on the Navajo Nation available from NavajoStrong: https://www.navajostrong.com/.

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

A Friends of IFCE Observation:

Our friends at UNM’s Family Development Program offer some guidance about mindfulness. Shockingly and suddenly, all of our usual habits and patterns have been deeply disrupted. It seems that we have an unprecedented opportunity to recreate or even re-imagine the ways that we usually connect to ourselves and others. Many of us are experiencing anxiety and a fear of the unknown. It may come in waves, or it may remain like a heaviness or distractibility throughout the day. In uncharted waters, like we all are experiencing right now, supporting sustained well-being for ourselves, our children, and our families is essential.

A daily practice of awareness, or mindfulness, can greatly help us do just that. The term “mindfulness” has its roots in prayer and meditation. Derivatives of this tradition have entered the American mainstream in recent years, in part through the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and his Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, which he launched at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in 1979. Since that time, thousands of research studies have documented the physical and mental health benefits of mindfulness, inspiring countless programs to adapt the MBSR model for schools, prisons, hospitals, veterans, nursing homes, and beyond.

With buzzwords flying around like “mindfulness, self-care, and meditation,” you may be asking yourself, “What does that really mean and how do I do it?!”

Here is a short guide to help you answer those questions:

- Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment.

- Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them—without believing, for instance, that there’s a “right” or “wrong” way to think or feel in a given moment.

- Finding a centering practice during the day is very personal and will be different for everyone.

- Looking for a new way of being, exploring nature, unplugging, creating space for reflection, choosing a positive outlook, paying attention to gratitude, or building compassion within your home or community are all mindfulness practices.
In creating new mental habits, we address changing our perspective - we look at this time as a time to slow down and find the joy in our lives. Changing the words we use with ourselves and out-loud can move us along. For example, using 'could' instead of 'should' or "I’m not there yet" instead of “I can’t do this."

By holding awareness, we are choosing to be present in moments, no matter how difficult, that are significant and meaningful.

Here are some guiding questions to help you navigate these times with strength and resilience and find your personal path (https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six_daily_questions_to_ask_yourself_in_quarantine):

1. What am I grateful for today?
2. Who am I checking in on or connecting with today?
3. What expectations of normal am I letting go of today?
4. How am I getting outside today?
5. How am I moving my body today?
6. What beauty am I either creating, cultivating, or inviting in today?

Another possible approach is to try is a technique called Brain Gym, which is a way of integrating the right and left sides of the brain to help you and your child feel calm and relaxed. We use Brain Gym to assist us in becoming more clear thinking, refocused, energized and motivated. Here is an example of one of the exercises:

Belly Breathing

1. Stand or sit comfortably.
2. Place your hands gently on your belly, right around your navel.
3. Take a long deep breath into your belly. Imagine your belly filling up, bottom first, all the way up to the top. You can imagine a pitcher being filled up with water.
4. Exhale for a count of eight. Imagine all of the air slowly being expelled.
5. Repeat steps 2 through 4, two more times or as desired.

This exercise improves communication and attention span. With deeper breaths, and therefore greater oxygen flow, your energy level increases.

Brain Gym is a set of 26 exercises designed by a physical therapist.
It is important to acknowledge our children’s and our own emotions during this time. You can use phrases like, “You’re safe. You can handle this. We’ll get through this together.” Encourage your family to name their feelings. And forgive yourself when you’re the one who’s had the fit or meltdown! (Resource: https://consciousdiscipline.com/covid-19-five-helpful-responses-for-families/)

There is a common phrase used widely by those who are working to implement the mindfulness movement in schools: “Trust the process.” It may not go smoothly at first, and sometimes may feel messy and uncomfortable, but you can continue to find ways to decompress by practicing mindfulness. Our emotional well-being can benefit the people around us. It is important to take care of ourselves so we can take care of the ones we love. Nourishing happiness is like sailing—constant little adjustments based on the weather that help get you where you want to go.

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**Breaks from seat and screen time**

- **Take a full ten-minute break each hour.**
- **Take a thirty second stretch break every 30 minutes.**
- **Every 20 minutes, take a 20 second break, look at something at least 20 feet away.**

Sitting in front of a computer screen much of the day, in uncomfortable furniture, performing repetitive motions, and getting little movement was always the lot of the office worker, not the school kid. My, how fast that has changed! With remote learning, our kids suddenly need to attend to being too sedentary, vision effects, and repetitive stress. Here are some resources
and tips for how to guide them through this environment. You’ve attended to all of these things for your work-at-home, too, right?

**Screen Time:**


- Give your eyes breaks from focusing on the screens: take at least **one ten-minute break every hour**. Or use the **20-20-20 strategy**. Every 20 minutes, look at something at least 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.

- Adult computers don’t fit kids well. [Here are some ergonomic tips for all of us](https://uhs.umich.edu/computerergonomics#move).

- “Train the operator”. Help kids learn how to self-regulate screen use in healthier ways.

- [Laptop Ergonomics](https://www.nps.edu/about/education/research/laptop-ergonomics/).

**Seat Time:**

- A few **ergonomic hacks** that cost little or nothing. This [YouTube video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ) has additional hacks. [Rolled towels](https://www.nps.edu/about/education/research/laptop-ergonomics/).  

- 30 second stretch break every 30 minutes; walk around a bit every hour or so.
  
  
  - [https://uhs.umich.edu/computerergonomics#move](https://uhs.umich.edu/computerergonomics#move)

- Some **good suggestions** from the LA Times.

- Here’s a [comprehensive guide](https://www.nps.edu/about/education/research/laptop-ergonomics/) that includes some videos, too.

**Movement and Breaks:**

- Schooling or working from home means we don’t even get the small movements like a walk up stairs or from our car or from classroom to classroom. [Put some of that movement back](https://www.nps.edu/about/education/research/laptop-ergonomics/)!
• **50 Brain Breaks**

• **Focused attention and brain breaks**

• **Exercises you can do at your desk**
  
  ○ **13 desk exercises**
  
  ○ **25 office exercises** with gifs
  
  ○ The **Secret Desk Workout**

• **Virtual PE -- videos and apps**

• **Get some exercise with your kids!**
  
  ○ **12 Home Workouts for Kids and Parents**
  
  ○ **10 Ways to Exercise as a Family**
  
  ○ **How to workout with your kids**

**Putting it All Together:**


• Need help remembering to take breaks? **There’s an app for that**.


• Watch carefully for signs your plan is or isn’t working. How is your child sleeping? Eating? How are their relationships? How is their mood? [https://childmind.org/article/screen-time-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/].

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When a COVID-19 vaccine does become available, **one third of people are saying they won’t get it**. **Other research is saying that family**, more than any other source, will influence people’s opinion about a vaccine. Now’s a good time to start those **gentle and caring conversations with your loved ones** about a vaccine.
Get your flu shot as soon as you can this season:

Don’t get numb to the numbers:

Struggling to get your kids to wear masks?

- Here’s an e-book written here in New Mexico, *Why Does My Teacher Wear a Mask?*
- Here’s a webinar with four useful suggestions:
- Children under 2 should NOT wear a mask. Here are considerations for who else should NOT wear a mask:

**Gains and Losses:**

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

Acquaintances, not only close friendships, can be important for our well-being, too:

Consider forming a Mutual Aid Group during this time:

The stresses associated with the COVID 19 pandemic continue to impact our everyday lives. Here is a video from the STAT (medical) Newsletter that explores how strong emotion and changes in context can affect our sense of time. The video also offers tips on what to do about the “time-blindedness” problem:
Coping Skills:

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

An IFCE Observation:

Ashley Martin-Cuellar (Visiting Lecturer in Family and Child Studies, and Marriage and Family Therapist) offers us a Pumpkin Spice meditation.

Pumpkin spice lattes can be made at home, or by traveling to one of the many places that sells them! If making it yourself, here is a quick and easy recipe: coffee, milk, any sweetener, pumpkin spice (from any grocery store). Or a more elaborate one: https://www.inspiredtaste.net/8419/pumpkin-spice-latte-at-home-recipe/

Meditation:

Sit in a comfortable way in a place with minimal distractions. Outside on a crisp fall day would be perfect!

Hold your beverage with both hands, warming them while you await the taste of fall. Lift the lid off your beverage if it has one. Observe the frothy milk on top and the way the milk and coffee intertwine.

- What do you notice?
- What do you see?
- If it’s cold enough and you are outside… notice the steam coming from the drink. Watch the steam move in the air.

Now consciously smell the aroma from the steam.

- What does it smell like?
- Do you like the smell?
- What do you like about the smell?
- Does the smell remind you of anything?
- Do any memories come up as you smell your drink?

Once you have fully engaged your senses for as long as you would like taste your drink.

- What does it taste like?
- Do you taste different flavors?
- How many different flavors do you taste? What are they?
- Do you like the taste?
- What do you like about the taste?
- Does the taste remind you of anything?
Do any memories come up as you taste this drink?

Now as you taste the pumpkin spice latte pay attention to the space around you.

- Do you hear anything?
- What sounds do you hear?
- What comes up for you as you listen and hear these sounds?

Relax and enjoy the gifts of feeling, smelling, hearing, tasting, and seeing.

Alone-time is really important while we’re sheltered with others so closely at home: [https://www.npr.org/2020/07/15/891564595/how-solitude-can-help-you-regulate-your-mood](https://www.npr.org/2020/07/15/891564595/how-solitude-can-help-you-regulate-your-mood).

Limit how much doomscrolling you do: “incessantly scrolling though bottomless doom-and-gloom news for hours as you sink into a pool of despair.”

If you’re going to use time outs with your kids, do them correctly: [https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/20/health/timeouts-done-right-work-wellness-partner/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/20/health/timeouts-done-right-work-wellness-partner/index.html).

Kristin Neff talks about the science of compassion: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0gtnOXAp-U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0gtnOXAp-U).


**Conflict Resolution:**

All of our relationships take extra attention right now.

Conflict, unfortunately, happens easily.


Learning how to take criticism in stride is a form of self-care. Here is a podcast on how to silence your critics and cope more effectively with negative feedback. It is an interview between UC Berkeley Professor Dacher Keltner and NPR’s Shereen Marisol Meraji (“Code Switch”): https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/podcasts/item/how_to_switch_off_critics_shereen_marisol_meraji_codeswitch.

Here is an article with tips on how to cope with criticism: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/just_one_thing_relax_youre_going_to_be_criticized.

The New Mexico 19:
Here are 19 ways to practice mindfulness in New Mexico:


3. Tara Brach’s Podcast has several mindfulness practice teachings and guided meditations: https://www.tarabrach.com/talks-audio-video/.


5. The Mindful New Mexico Facebook Group: https://www.facebook.com/mindfulnewmexico/.

6. Meditation video of New Mexico photos and music: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97CGYpV61K0.


10. 10 ways to practice mindfulness at work: https://thriveglobal.com/stories/10-ways-to-practice-mindfulness-at-work/.
11. 8 steps for more mindful eating:


13. 12 ways to be a more mindful couple:
https://goodness.me/relationships/366191/couple-mindfulness-tips.

14. Mindfulness for families from Zero to Three:

15. Six mindfulness activities to do as a family:

16. 51 mindfulness exercises for kids:
https://www.waterford.org/resources/mindfulness-activities-for-kids/.


18. 25 mindfulness activities for healthy aging:
https://www.aplaceformom.com/resources/mindfulness-activities.


For Those in the Helping Professions:

Educating for Black Lives is a set of readings and resources from Routledge. This includes a piece by IFCE’s Martin Jones, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology.

Art lesson plans by Native artists about influential Native personalities today (like Deb Haaland!):

The Bookshelf -- References and Other Resources

Greater Good Magazine -- science-based insights for a meaningful life.


Surviving Columbus. “This Peabody Award-winning documentary from New Mexico PBS looks at the European arrival in the Americas from the perspective of the Pueblo Peoples.”
Coming up Next:
Embracing the Outdoors on September 19 -- Now that we’re back to more structure with the school year, and the nights are getting longer and cooler, it’s a great time to embrace the outdoors here in New Mexico before winter arrives. Our minds and bodies need to get out from in front of the screens and outside more perhaps now than earlier. Many of the events that drew us outside, the State Fair, the Balloon Fiesta, the harvest festivals, aren’t going to provide that opportunity this year. So let’s resolve to go outside!

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 bi-weekly, each with a theme relevant to our times.

We are exiting the initial phase of 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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