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.
Summer, and especially this summer, is a great time for refreshing. We refill our spirits, reinspire our minds, and reinvigorate our bodies. WASH NM has reflected on our work since June, 2020. We’ve selected some of our favorite pieces from the WASH’s first year to share with you now. Their relevance yet seems fresh while their content feels timeless.
At the outset, we had a section of WASH NM entitled It’s a Marathon, not a Sprint. In January, 2021, we changed the name of this section to Keep on Keeping On!. 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 January, 2021. It’s now July, 2021, and we’re even more sure that 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!
I oftentimes feel like I have to look on the positive side of things. I know research tells me this is the case... Having a grateful orientation or disposition is good for wellbeing. I certainly consider myself optimistic and value the benefits of being in a positive mood, but I can't ignore the frustration of someone else telling me to be grateful... “You should be grateful for ______, it made you who you are.” While, yes, it did, it still sucks sometimes!

Although a gratitude perspective is an important perspective to have, I’ve learned that it’s okay to not be okay. In fact, feeling the emotion, the negative emotion, is certainly healthier than not allowing myself to feel anything at all. Stuffing feelings away doesn’t allow us to experience them, feel them, and then move through them. Feeling all emotions is healthy. When we stop feeling the negative ones, we also don’t feel the positive ones to their fullest.

I have been struggling with guilt for some of my emotions during the pandemic—being sad, discouraged, bored, tired of the monotony—and finding myself trying to look on the bright side of things... or telling myself that I should be grateful. I am absolutely grateful for so many things in my life, but I am also sad, discouraged, bored, and tired of the monotony. I think gratitude and these emotions can co-exist.

In the spirit of gratitude during this time of year, let us honor all emotions and feelings. Let us not minimize the emotions of others, because we can all probably admit, right now, some things just suck.

Toxic positivity is being positive all the time, especially when something truly negative is going on. Here are some articles about toxic positivity:


https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/toxic-positivity-mental-health-covid/2020/08/19/5dff8d16-e0c8-11ea-8181-606e603bb1c4_story.html


During a global pandemic and economic recession, it can seem impossible.

Participants in a recent Job Search during COVID-19 workshop offered by UNM’s Career Services used words like struggle, uncertain, daunting, overwhelming, nerve-wracking, even defeated to describe the feelings they have regarding their current job search. And no wonder. Cases of COVID-19 are once again on the rise in New Mexico. Businesses are closed. Social distancing has altered the way we stay connected. But if you’re a job seeker, take heart. Hiring is still taking place, and with some changes in your job search strategy, you can increase your chances of success!

Whether you are looking for the ideal opportunity to propel you along the path to your dream job or just looking for a temporary position to put food on the table, the key to a successful job search is still networking, even if it’s from home. Up to 80% of hiring takes place through the hidden job market - through referrals or people who are already known to the hiring manager. It’s less risky for employers to hire folks who are known to them. What can you as a job seeker do to get known? Continue to grow your professional network. Strengthen the relationships you already have and look for ways to make new connections.

- We’ve all been at home for four months. This is a perfect time to reach out to those you’ve lost touch with and see how they’re doing. Is there someone they can connect you with?

- Make sure to share your goals and aspirations with friends and family. They can network on your behalf.

- Identify professionals and hiring managers in your field of interest or in your target organizations. Arrange for virtual informational interviews.

Building your professional network takes time, but it is by far the most effective strategy for a successful job search!

Tips for job seekers:

- Hiring is still taking place - over 400 new jobs are added per week in Handshake, UNM’s database of jobs and internships. Register today! https://unm.joinhandshake.com/

- Write/revise your resume. See the Career Tools page on the Career Services website https://career.unm.edu/career-tools/index.html

- Reach out to your contacts and reconnect.

- Create/boost your LinkedIn profile.

- Consider volunteering https://www.centerfornonprofitexcellence.org/

- Schedule an appointment with a Career Counselor at Career Services! We serve the entire UNM community – students, alumni, faculty, staff, and retirees. Email onlinecareerservices@unm.edu to get started.

Reach out for additional support if needed:


Our current COVID-19 situation has resulted in a change in our life routines, one important routine being our sleep.

As most people can attest, not sleeping well can result in feeling groggy, irritable and impatient. Perhaps not surprisingly, sleep problems also elevate risk for people to become aggressive. Sleep problems impair functioning in the prefrontal cortex, a region of the brain that helps control emotions including aggressive impulses. Sleep problems also amplify angry feelings and hostile thoughts, both of which lead to aggression. In other words, sleep problems often lead people to become irritated and provoked more quickly and they may even behave in ways that they would otherwise see as wrong or that are in sharp contrast to their values.

Along this line, researchers who are interested in understanding the underpinnings of family violence and aggression have taken a strong interest in sleep. Couples who do not receive sufficient and/or high quality sleep (for example, frequent night wakings or difficulty falling asleep) are prone to having heated arguments. Such couples are also at risk to behave in ways that are destructive to their marriages. This includes name calling, making a partner feel guilty or shamed and physical aggression (slapping, hitting, throwing objects). Sleep problems also decrease parents’ abilities to be patient with their children, which can lead to resorting to harsh disciplinary tactics. My new research has shown that fathers in particular are prone to yell/scream, verbally assault and hit their children when they have not received sufficient and high quality sleep. On a more positive note, research has shown that obtaining more optimal sleep can improve the marital relationship and parent-child relationship.

The $1,000,000 question may then be, “how can I obtain optimal sleep?” As one can imagine, this oftentimes is easier said than done. Many individuals live in a context that does not promote sleep. For example, those living below the poverty line often work multiple shifts to make ends meet, do not have climate control (a hot residence in the summer and below freezing temperatures in the winter), live in areas where air quality is low and outside noise is high (e.g., near airports), and have insufficient sleeping supplies (e.g., few beds, no rooms designated specifically for sleeping); such conditions strike at the core of what is required for optimal sleep. To give another example, nightshift workers understandably face obstacles to maintain a consistent sleep schedule. Overall, out of no fault of their own some individuals face an uphill battle to obtain good sleep because of the context in which they reside. In such cases, changes to the context hold promise for improving sleep. For instance, providing more optimal sleeping conditions for those facing impoverished living conditions has been shown to be effective and many companies now require that shift workers take naps during the night shift.
At the individual level, there are steps one can take to obtain good sleep. Below is a list of things from the field of sleep health that have been shown to improve sleep and daytime functioning:

• The brain’s sleep system thrives on consistency. Along this line, one of the most important steps one can take is to maintain a consistent bed and morning wake time. Similarly, it is very helpful not to fluctuate the amount of sleep one receives each night.

• The National Sleep Foundation has begun to offer recommendations on the amount of sleep one should obtain. These recommendations are increasingly being based on what has shown to correlate with optimal health. See the following website: https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/how-much-sleep-do-we-really-need

• Individuals who struggle to fall asleep often experience anxiety and they may begin to stare at the clock or ruminate how tired they will feel the following day. There are things one can do. Take the clocks out of the room. Also, sleep cannot be forced. Give yourself permission not to sleep or to take a long time to fall asleep.

• Maintain a regular exercise schedule and engage in physical activity daily.

• Limit exposure to screens at night.

• Read a comforting book before bedtime or journal happy thoughts.

• Maintain a consistent bedtime routine. In other words, try to do the same things each night before bed.

• Try to avoid spending time in the bedroom when not sleeping.

• Naps are useful; for those who do nap, ensure that they occur around the same time each day.

• Prioritize sleep. While this may be easier said than done, valuing sleep like other facets of health (e.g., diet, oral hygiene, exercise) will help reach optimal health.

• Create a fun and inviting sleep environment. For example, invest in a new mattress, place desired artwork on the bedroom walls or paint the bedroom walls calming colors (i.e., light grey). Create your own oasis!

Have you ever felt the urge to share a story right after you just heard a story? Like, “Oh! I have got one! You are not going to believe this story…” Conversation moves from person to person, another story and another thing to share… with everyone listening just to be reminded of a time when...

Or have you ever had a conversation with a partner, and they tell you about their day and then you say, “well, you’ll never guess what happened in my day…” Or when a partner may say something you did wrong and you come back with, “well, you aren’t so great either…”

We oftentimes listen just to respond. We listen just enough to have something to say back that is witty, smart, funny, to defend ourselves, one-up another person, to be better than, or to push back. I find in my own life and in my practice as a Marriage and Family Therapist working with couples and families, that we do a lot of listening to respond and not enough listening to understand.
It takes work to listen to understand. It takes a conscious effort to listen with the intent to
hear and not just for what you are going to say next. It takes being mindful and attuned to
yourself and your thoughts throughout a conversation. It takes focused attention on the
person sharing their story.

I challenge my couples and parents (and myself!) to practice this intentional listening skill
to see what happens when we really listen. What would it be like to listen to your partner/
child/friend/colleague's story with the intent just to hear it? No fixing, no advice, no follow-
up story... just listening for how they felt, or for the funny things that happened, for the
punchline, or for the poetic way that the story played out. We can just appreciate that they
shared it with us. Listening with the intention to understand someone gives meaning to
their story for them and for you. When we reflect what we heard it gives the storyteller an
opportunity to elaborate and give further details. As we continue to physically distance from
one another, social connection and being heard is even more important than ever. We can
really enhance our relationships and connections with others through practicing our attuned
listening skills.

This psychology today post speaks more specifically to listening skills and how to listen to
understand more and listen to respond less:

https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-right-balance/201610/are-you-really-
listening-or-just-waiting-talk

Is it just me, or are the days
just blending together?

It seems that for all intents and purposes, all we
have is work and home, home and work. Maybe
if we are lucky, there is some variation with
the occasional grocery store visit or because
of our scenic beauty here in New Mexico, we
can do some hiking. Yet, despite some of these
reprieves from the mundane, COVID has forced
all of us to navigate our world in ways that we
are less than used to. In this largely isolated,
boring, and for some, even stressful and anxious
world of COVID, we must wear multiple masks.
In this world, our mental health and mental
stamina are being constantly tested.

At any given moment, we (myself included) float between anxiety and sadness (somedays I
feel like a yo-yo). Nonetheless, there is a need to develop some sort of strange resiliency in
the face of ever-increasing ambiguity and limitations in social support - a world where we
are all disconnected and the handshake or hug has given way to the elbow or sometimes just
a wave. It is isolating - at least comparatively to pre-COVID. What do we do in this new and
strange world, how do we cope, and what touchstones of support do we have? Some of us
choose to wear masks without considering the toll this takes on our daily lives.

Wearing Masks

What mask do you wear on most days? Personally, I wear a mask on the hardest days of this
pandemic. I put it on for my son, my spouse, my students, my parents etc. I personify the
upbeat, warm, and caring person that so many have characterized me as being. Yet, it is
hard in a world of isolation and a world of worrying and being downhearted. With more time
on my hands, due to the pandemic, I find it easier to sit with my feelings (rumination was
already part of my modus operandi) - and because of the pandemic, I am forced to be more
aware of my feelings (not much room for distraction). As we approach Halloween, wearing
a mask and taking on different personas is poignant and makes me even more aware of not
only my fragility but also the fragility of so many people during this time - a time where we
are navigating lives that are complex.
During COVID, many (if not all) of us are forced to deal with our unique and special demons (can you tell I am keeping up this Halloween theme). It is hard to even consider how to have “good mental health” and take stock of our mental stamina. We often are asking ourselves, “What mask do I wear today?” Do I take on the warm and humorous dad, who will be a superhero with my son and fly around “the world” (really our living room)? Alternatively, do I take on how I am really feeling – stressed and unsure because I am ruminating over “what comes next”? Of course, my struggle isn’t everyone’s struggle. But like so many, I rotate through an endless cycle of trying to be the best person I can, while also grappling with the more difficult aspects of my own feelings.

Reflecting on these realities, I recall the movie Nightmare before Christmas – a Tim Burton stop-action film that came out in the early 1990s. As some of you recall, the Mayor of Halloween Town shifts between chipper and self-assured, to downtrodden and anxious. At any given moment, the mayor shifts or pivots. This allusion may be representative to what many of us (myself included) are feeling today – at any given moment we shift between chipper and self-assured, to beat-up, downtrodden, and maybe anxious. It is a tough time, don’t get me wrong, but we must consider how to focus on the silver linings and identify touchstones of support in the midst of such difficulties. We will always wear masks, but how do we ensure that our mask(s) is more genuine to what we are actually feeling?

Where do we go from here?

The Centers for Disease Control indicates that 7.1% (probably closer to 10%) of the population suffers from depression or anxiety at any given time. In light of COVID, recent estimates have expanded to 31%. Many of us do not consider the fatigue we are generally under due to shifting the masks we are wearing, along with the added bonus of isolation. What do wearing masks and the realities presented by COVID do to our emotional and physical health? As with the mayor of Halloween Town from The Nightmare Before Christmas, we may be wearing the mask of an upbeat, chipper, and self-assured employee, spouse, or father, while really we may be more aptly wearing the mask of the beat-up and downtrodden. Many of us, if not all of us, are in a constant state of flux.

As a therapist, I know too well the strain that such flux (happy to sad, stressed to content) can have. We live in a world where we worry about physical health over mental health. And as social beings, we as humans are not used to living in an isolated state relative to what we were used to pre-COVID. So what do we do? What advice do I have for you? I think, for me, and maybe for you, we must find ways of belonging to the world. There are many ways we can increase our own resilience during this time and begin navigating our wellness and mental health, and if we have to wear a mask ensure that it is more aligned to our actual emotions versus the emotions we want to “show” to the world. One of the first ways is to enjoy your own company and be your own friend.

1. Be your own friend: You live with yourself 24/7, and if you can’t learn to love yourself and all your imperfections, then it’s going to be a hellish time. Build on your comforts and identify those comforts that help in different ways – a smorgasbord of remedies to choose from. Not all of these remedies will work, but like most ‘medicines’ at some point your remedy may no longer work and you have to find other ways of loving yourself.

2. Be random: Do something out of the ordinary (within the scope of your own life). At the peak of the pandemic, I was stuck in the monotony of work and home. So, I decided to reupholster, learn some woodwork and stain an old rocking chair. I am not what you call handy and it was indeed ‘random’ for me (at least). I felt so confident, I put down new floors in our house with the help of my spouse who is handy. What I am saying is just do something that you maybe never thought you could do and enjoy it!

3. Take care of your body: Take deep breaths or meditate. Exercise as regularly as possible and if able, try to sleep plenty, and eat well. (See our Back to Basics issue.) I am not what you call an ‘athlete’, however, since COVID I started running. I am calm, less anxious and I actually enjoy it.

4. Take care of your emotional health: Mental health treatment or therapy is stigmatized in the US - no question. This could be one of the best ways to not only have social connection but also process your feelings and all the masks that you wear.
5. Remember to connect with others: There are ways to connect. We thrive to belong. Human connection is a necessity. Can you connect via FaceTime or Zoom with a friend or family member? My friends live all around the country - CA, Maryland, NJ and we attempt to connect once per week via Zoom to talk and catch up. We started a Book Club! (more like Comic book Club) For you, this may be important, too.


“Living in the tension” as we navigate gains and losses has recently become a new mindset.

To be quite honest, when I first undertook writing about gains and losses for navigating back to schooling among children and families, I had a moment of pause. What input can I offer that will help so many impacted to navigate these trying times?

As a parent, and full-time mother, I realized it became time to personally examine gains and losses. Recently, I stopped my car on the side of the road to rescue two lost dogs, and I met the driver behind me who offered to help me safely get the dogs to my car. As they held one of the dogs, they shared that they were grieving the very recent loss of their child. It was in this moment that we exchanged numbers, each gained a new friend, and offered each other a little bit of hope.

After some reflection, the existential idea of positive disintegration (Dąbrowski) came to mind, as does this idea of “living in the tension” or the “and.” Essentially, we are all collectively experiencing anxiety, fear, and concerns of health and child development as we make decisions around back to schooling. These decisions cannot be avoided, will take thoughtful reflection, and will leave us without a perfect resolution (resulting in tension). Concurrently, through self-reflection and conscious assessment of our values and the qualities we want to hold while sitting in this tension, we may come out of this even stronger than before (see Positive Psychology).

As we navigate the new school year, I realized I have gained some more input in my daughter’s reading material, and lost some confidence in what her next year (and mine) will look like. I have gained some brief day trips (White Sands National Park), and memories with my daughter, and lost some
work related productivity. But, without some self-reflection about mindfulness, some pretty impressive memories that were in the making may have also been lost, and that time is irreplaceable. So with that, I ask what have you lost and gained as we navigate our new school year. How are you living in this “and” or “sitting in the tension?”

- Thich Nhat Hanh poson The Practice of Mindfulness article is [here](https://www.yourwebsite.com).
- Dealing with Uncertainty During the Coronavirus Pandemic article is [here](https://www.yourwebsite.com).
- Post-Traumatic Growth: Finding Meaning and Creativity in Adversity is [here](https://www.yourwebsite.com).
- Living in the Tension, an article is [here](https://www.yourwebsite.com).

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**An IFCE Perspective**

**Motivating and Supporting Kids**

*November 14, 2020*

Jan Armstrong
Professor of Educational Psychology

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*Psychology is a science that examines and reveals the masks we wear.*

In the past half century, psychologists have shed useful light on how our brains can deceive us, resulting in flawed decision making and actions that produce results counter to what we intended or desired. This includes work that shows the way our minds are prone to biases that can lead to poor decision making and undermine rather than build motivation. When scientists gain new insights into human nature, we may find it necessary to let go of customary beliefs and behaviors. Change is stressful and difficult, but humans are built to adapt! Change is the price, and the reward of progress.

Parents are now playing a greater part than ever in their children’s development, supervising online learning and daily activities without the benefits of peer play, school and other organized sites of socialization. As cognitive and educational psychologists have gained new insights into teaching and learning, they have identified better and worse ways to help our children learn. Here are some upbeat video clips from the Smithsonian Museum that illustrate areas in which many of us need to rethink our assumptions about the nature of learning, and how best to motivate children and others to learn.

- Good Thinking! Attack the Knack: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikPsFx6Pnxg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikPsFx6Pnxg)
- Good Thinking! Sending learning styles out of style: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9hTWRwfZOc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9hTWRwfZOc)
- Good Thinking! Conceptual change: How new ideas take root: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N3a_4471DEU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N3a_4471DEU)
In the early winter I had a telephone conversation with my older brother, John, who was steeped in worry and contemplation.

His son, my nephew, Dominic, returned to school after a bout of remote learning. Dominic was in a new class that was structured for in person learning. Dominic was displaced because his close friends chose different learning options. Dominic was asked to introduce himself to his peers in an ice breaker introduction and was asked to share his name and his favorite color. Dominic shared that his favorite color is pink with glitter. This disclosure triggered discomfort with some of his classmates that culminated in shaming and bullying. Dominic retreated and didn't want to return to school.

John was in a space of wanting to protect Dominic and advocate for him. It seemed that John already had a course of action in place. He drafted an email to support awareness about what had developed to Dominic’s teacher. He took swift action to help mitigate what could develop, in an effort to prevent the bullying that Dominic had experienced in the last school year.

I worked really hard to be a good listener with my brother as it seemed that he organized and grounded himself through the course of our dialogue. I stepped into the dialogue and let my brother know that his loving actions mean more than he will ever know to Dominic. I wanted for my brother to know how big these actions are and that they make a big difference in the life of a child. I wanted for my brother to know that the most important thing is that Dominic is loved and feels loved by the most important people in his life, his mother and father, and that love is not conditional on his favorite color. From my perspective that is key to Dominic’s developing view of the world and his sense of self.

I internally celebrated that Dominic had the courage to stay true to his self and share his favorite color knowing that it wouldn’t be agreeable to some of his classmates. Dominic experienced care and support from his parents and that they would work to mitigate the shame he had already incurred. That their course of action was not to change Dominic to fit into the world but to change the world so that Dominic could safely share his favorite color. I wanted to celebrate that Dominic’s teacher worked in partnership with my brother to develop a plan of action.

As I pondered Dominic’s situation, it invited me to reflect on my childhood experiences with understanding and awareness. As a child I was perplexed, and did not understand why I was different. I loved hop scotch, jump rope and playing on the swings. The adults in my life redirected me to what they deemed as being socially acceptable for a male. The message I received was, it is not safe to embrace my authentic self. It made me feel that I had to reinvent myself in a way that I could have a fighting chance of being accepted in the world I lived in. It made me feel shameful about what I was naturally excited and curious about. For most of my early years there was no one I could safely explore the emotional turmoil I was silently experiencing. Shame and repression are intricately integrated and woven into the threads of my identity. I have to be aware of how they can creep into my life at any moment and swipe away opportunities and limit my experiences.

The conversation I had with my brother made me hopeful about Dominic’s course being different. His parent’s love him unconditionally, stand up for him, they protect and advocate for him and most importantly they didn’t redirect him about his favorite color. My hope is that Dominic does not have to oppress his true self and that he can trust the adults in his life to support his best interests. I am hopeful that it is an indication of the changing times. A remarkable shift from one generation to the next in terms of our capacity to support inclusion and acceptance.
The pandemic experience has created space for all of us to reflect on our ever evolving identity and reassess what we want to promote in the world. I am wondering about how I can be more intentional about supporting diversity, acceptance and inclusion. I want for every family to embrace how important they are in how their child experiences the world. That they are their child’s first and most important teacher. I want every family to feel empowered to advocate for their child in all of life’s arenas.

As I roll into the next phase of the pandemic transition experience I want to engage my sense of self as malleable, with openness to new challenges, experiences, and ultimately, growth.

I want to be courageous enough to share that my favorite color is pink with glitter.

An IFCE Perspective

The Power of AND
August 5, 2020

Jay Parkes
Professor of Educational Psychology

As we make our daily decisions as individuals, as family members, as employees and as a society, we could benefit from the power of AND right now.

Social media, other media, and political commentators seem enamored of OR.

• My decision whether to wear a mask is driven either by my beliefs about my rights and freedoms OR by my understanding of science.

• Either my 77 year old mother stays home at all times OR she endangers her health through lots of social interactions.

• Either I return to work OR I provide good childcare for my children.
• Either we open schools OR we keep teachers and students safe.

OR works really well in headlines and in social media posts of a relatively few words, and it oversimplifies the complexities and nuances in the decisions we must make. OR separates issues and polarizes them. OR pushes the issues to their extremes. OR is exclusionary of other issues.

The reality is that each of the decisions we must make will be made best by weighing and balancing all issues, not dismissing any that are relevant. OR signals elimination of an issue; AND balances the issues.

How much different -- and more real and accurate -- do these restatements seem?

• My decision whether to wear a mask is driven by my beliefs about my rights and freedoms AND by my understanding of science.

• My mother should stay home as much as possible AND she needs social interaction, etc.

• I should return to work AND my children need good childcare.

• **We should open schools AND we should keep teachers and students safe.**

AND will lead to solutions that represent the realities, the beliefs and values, of the different issues we need to juggle. AND allows us to prioritize concerns, not dismiss them.

The next time you hear an actual or implied OR, see how your thinking changes if you change it to AND.

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**Natural and social adversities impact daily living, one’s sense of self, and relationships.**

The impact can be temporary or last for generations. Needless to say, ways to honor, cope, and support have been a natural response to adversity amongst many societies across the globe throughout time. Some of these responses may come in forms of “celebrations” or “festivities,” and may also be part of culturally based rituals. They may have both religious and non-religious underpinnings and be individually or collectively practiced. Either way they provide a way to make meaning of life, especially when adversities do not make sense. While stereotypically associated with casting spells and harm, when performed with healing intention rituals provide many functions such as catharsis, ethical obligation, verbal and non-verbal expression, intent to prevent or turn harm away, opportunity to re-create, identity development, and social or relational cohesion (Cardenas & Cousins, 2010; Legare & Sauza, 2012; Post, 2015). Even mundane rituals have an impact on our wellbeing as noted in neuroscience such as expressing gratitude, activating our reward center; labeling of feelings, reducing amygdala reactivity; and touch or connection, creating a sense of acceptance and inclusion (Korb, 2015). Collectively we are witnessing social isolation and exclusion, not knowing what sense to make of it. The most secular rituals (a kind and acknowledging head nod), celebrations (having a meal over a video conference), and creation of spaces and moments of honor (e.g. four directions prayer or supporting a cause), may work toward building and maintaining healing, wellness, and creating meaning at individual, relational, and communal levels. Family therapists Imber-Black & Roberts (1998) explain and provide more ways to incorporate intentional ritual in daily life in their book “Rituals for Our Times: Celebrating Healing, and Changing Our Lives and Our Relationships.” Maria Elena Salazar’s essay, below, illustrates many of these points.
Here are two links about rituals: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-flux/201508/10-ways-rituals-help-us-celebrate-our-lives and https://www.huffpost.com/entry/celebrations-rituals-and-

La Hilacha: Words and Memories is a podcast from the History and Literary Arts Program at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque. This episode explores the practice of traditional healing and recipes for healing and is called, “Healing Ourselves: Ancestral Traditions.” https://lahilacha1.podbean.com/e/healing-ourselves-ancestral-traditions/

Long ago, anthropologists experimented with poetry as a way to express complex ideas about social and psychological life.

Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead and Edward Sapir (early 20th century cultural anthropologists) all wrote poetry, and today it is not unusual to see scholarly and teaching performances of poetry at academic conferences in the human and psychological sciences. What is poetry? Howard Nemerov described poetry as “literature that evokes a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience or a specific emotional response through language chosen and arranged for its meaning, sound, and rhythm.” An ode is a particular kind of poem: “a lyric poem in the form of an address to a particular subject, often elevated in style or manner and written in varied or irregular meter. A poem meant to be sung.” Some poems rhyme, and that is fine, but poetry does not have to rhyme.

Poet Laureate of the United States Joy Harjo (Muscogee Creek), a graduate of the University of New Mexico, observed that “The world begins at the kitchen table” in Perhaps the World Ends Here. Born in 1951, Harjo has created numerous books of poetry, books for young people, albums of original music, and more. She published her first book of poetry (What Moon Drove Me to This?) in 1980. The Poetry Foundation offers a sampler of Joy Harjo’s poems, and the work of other Native American poets. Poetry illuminates the human experience, as in Simon Ortiz’ (Acoma) reflections on Becoming Human.

The American humorist Ogden Nash (1902 - 1971) used poetic verses to amuse, delight, surprise, and captivate readers. As Jama Kim Rattigan (2011) wrote in her Alphabet Soup food blog: “Who else so deftly misspells words (or makes up his own), packs in the puns, teases the reader with irregular meter and lines of uneven length? He took great pleasure in the element of surprise, pulling out all the stops for comic effect.” Nash wrote quite a number of poems about food. For example,

**The Parsnip**
The parsnip, children, I repeat,  
Is simply an anemic beet.  
Some people call the parsnip edible;  
Myself, I find this claim incredible.

And,

**The Cow**
The Cow is of bovine ilk;  
One end is moo, the other is milk.

For more food poems with illustrations, see Ogden Nash (1989). Food. Stewart Tabori & Chang
Here is an activity that could be done on one’s own or with others. Write a poem about food and share/exchange it with a friend or family member. If you prefer, write and share a personal story about food. Illustrate your poem or story with a drawing. This might be a great way for elders to share reminiscences about family food traditions. It could possibly become a new family food-related tradition!

Here is my own contribution to this year’s WASH NM food poem exchange. I wrote this last summer while thinking about the wider context of food as an aspect of human lifespan development and wellbeing in New Mexico.

**An Ode to Food**

Food!

Food for pleasure  
Food for health  
Food for thought
  sustenance
  comfort
  survival

Food deserts  
Food insecurity  
Food rules  
Food and culture  
  and tradition
  and learning
  and sharing
  and joining together
  and excluding

Food competitions  
Contesting food

Taste and Consumption  
as experience
  and expression
was to attend a funeral. Non- and covid-related, in this human’s view. Fifteen year old shot in his car, while going for takeout, amidst the pandemic. Of course I had to attend my cousin’s son’s funeral. A hundred people were there an hour early, as was I, hoping the funeral home would let us pay our respects to his mother before the crowd and social distancing business. But I digress. You might better know me as Dr. Salazar or Maria Elena (ME), but three of my roommates call me mama. La Mama is also my tech name as maintained in my car, phone, Amazon account, etc., by my personal tech support, aka my twelve year old daughter Estela.

My chosen profession has granted me summer breaks at home with my three children, Lilia, Estela and Roman. Much of that time I was working on advanced degrees, and sometimes working from home. More than a decade later, the four of us know the drill. When the quarantine hit in March, we reverted to this routine, but added in more schoolwork. I compiled tips from our summer breaks and from the spring 2020 quarantine to assist other families. Take the below tips from La Mama’s perspective with a grain of salt. Norms to surviving (and maybe even doing a little thriving?) the 2020 summer in NM, according to ME:

1. Familism. How to navigate family.

New Mexicans are known for familism, or placing high value on maintaining familial relationships. Quarantine makes choosing who to be around, when and how long, complicated. Rule number one is to choose family members that are essential to your immediate household’s well-being. Sometimes they will choose themselves, like my neighbor Quino (more below) and my parents did. Despite their own pre-existing conditions and ages, my parents welcome their children, grandchildren, and any other pleasant human being into their homes despite day, year, time, mood, and pandemic. My dad helps all three of my children with their math homework; this automatically includes my parents in our quarantine circle. In fact necessitates it. Who’s smarter than a fifth grader? Not Dr. Salazar. Grandpa Salazar is also a “Grandchild Whisperer.” He can calm down any irate teen and make the crankiest baby smile. Therefore any day of any given year, a cruise to my parents’ house to eat cheese and crackers and to chit chat (and to leave a child or three for a few hours or days) is warranted.

Of course, as a Norteña³, almost the entire world is considered family. (Northern New Mexico as the center of the universe? Discuss amongst yourselves.)

³ Northern New Mexico woman.
Quino has been retired for like 30 years, and rarely leaves our neighborhood. On his twice-daily Polarus drives to the mailbox and the ditch gate\(^4\), he likes to stop by our house to ask if anyone wants to go for a ride. I also consider my friends Fatima and Victoria essential to my quarantine circle. I have walked in the mountains and sat parallel on a large porch with my friends. I think rural people like myself especially rely on social interaction for wellbeing. Laughter is the best medicine. Here again it is important to practice good judgment, then decide outdoor or indoor, masks, length of visit, etc.

I also find it important to feel confident in these individuals’ hygiene. Do they go out with masks? Do they clean their home often? Tip: If you are comfortable with asking these individuals these questions, and if they are receptive to answering them without (too much) hostility, they are probably practicing good quarantine. Note: I have an ally in my parents’ house. My nephew came to visit my parents for spring break and never left after his Texas high school closed. He ensures grandpa wears his mask when he goes to Lowe’s and grandma is using Clorox when she wipes down the coffee table.

In short, I use the any given day rule to gauge my quarantine circle. Who would you be visiting and who would be visiting you on any given day of the year? That might help you decide who to include in your circle. If some family members take offense to your not visiting or allowing them to visit, then they need to revisit their own familism, in my own opinion.

2. How to be groomed.

As New Mexicans, we pride ourselves on groomed appearances. This can be evidenced in even the lowest ses\(^5\) communities, where children are regularly brought to school dressed to the nines. I grieved the loss of flaunting my spring wardrobe in April, hesitantly putting away capris and camisoles that would not be worn (They shall rise again!). I was always a spa addict, soaking in hot springs and getting massages since a young child. I was not “spoiled,” mind you, but rather exercising my New Mexicanismo of engaging with the natural world. My scoliosis also needs frequent attention. During this time I have increased my online retail therapy, spending much on “spa” products, such as a face roller (why did I not discover this one before? $10 at Walgreens!), body scrubs, and bath salts. Now, I am still eager to see my sobadora\(^6\) and soak in Truth or Consequences, but homemade treatments like brown sugar and honey scrubs will keep me satiated until that time comes.

Further along the lines of physical appearance, I find it helpful to “clean up” once in a while. I have only done this myself a handful of times since early March, and it was a drag to do. Ordinarily I do not enjoy applying makeup and all that routine, so at this time I really need incentive to throw on a nice shirt. (Here again online retail therapy may come in handy. A new blouse from an end-of-season sale can inspire you to blow dry your hair.)

Now I do mention shopping, but this causes us to pause on the New Mexican experience of Cambalache\(^7\). For instance, my daughters and I increased our wardrobes a few weeks back after my niece gave us two bags of clothes. But I digress. Now and again take the time to style your hair and throw on an outfit that makes you feel good. I went with my husband to his office in Santa Fe once, and the experience propelled me to take a selfie (a rarity for me). Another tip is to get or make a mask that reflects your personal style. New Mexico has a strong artistic heritage; use it to inspire your homemade mask.

Summers are mostly casual attire in my house. I say follow NM child-rearing practices and let the children run around in diapers and undershirts. You’re a New Mexican if you have a baby picture of yourself with watermelon juice drying on your bare chest, arms and legs.

\(^4\) Where the water for community ditches is released.
\(^5\) Socio-economic status.
\(^6\) Masseuse who practices holistic treatment, such as praying after the massage.
\(^7\) Translated as junkshop. An Hispano practice of gathering items no longer used and exchanging them with other community members.
3. Rethink local and indigenous diets.

As a New Mexican, I pride myself on our indigenous diet. The three sisters (corns, beans and squash) sustained our ancestors. Bean juice was in our baby bottles and cast iron pans were the norm. I grew up in a pesticide-free orchard, so organic has always been my reality. I have apple, pear, cherry, peach and apricot trees in my own yard, and we usually have a garden. I think I love to eat fresh peas because my mom craved them when she was pregnant with my sisters and me. My dad planted a field of them then and since. As I ahem, age, I appreciate my local cuisine more. I like to think my heart is strong from many decades of eating chile, and beets from my neighbor’s garden stave off my lifelong battle with anemia. Lest we forget tomatoes are indigenous to the Americas? So, before you emotionally eat whatever is in a box in the cabinet, see what is fresh at your local community and farmers’ markets. I’m currently enjoying sunflower sprouts, golden and red beets, and spinach. Ver dulagas\(^8\), anyone? Side note here: Rethink what you throw away. This May, I learned how to cook beet leaves.

That said, even nutritionists will tell you to splurge once in a while. I recommend sopapilllas and Sonic. I recently enjoyed a chocolate sundae with nuts...

MAMA TIP! Invest in a freezer. I did many years ago, largely to store my husband Lucas’s deer, elk and beef (his family hunts, and his dad is a cattleman). Lucas often recalls his grandparents’ second refrigerator, where extra New Mexican staples, such as chicos, were stored. Many years ago, I started cooking in bulk (my familism prepared me for this, lol), and then freezing at least half. On Saturdays, I’ll sauté the tomatoes my neighbor gave me, then freeze the sauce in one pound containers. I find almost anything (not mashed potatoes) can be frozen.

Another mama tip: Cook your beans low and slow, and only with salt. Other New Mexicans add flour, pork cuts and other items to their beans, but my beans include three ingredients: pinto beans, salt and water. If you cook them low and slow, and stir once in a while, you will have creamy, soft beans any New Mexican will love. If your children are young, you can also swap pinto for great northern and other bean varieties. But once your children are older they will know you are not feeding them their pintos, and mentally their frito pie will be compromised. Your children may prefer their meals deconstructed, as mine do. I find they are more prone to eat their vegetables and meals if they are served this way. If you need alone time, it is a good idea to do your baking in the middle of a June day. I am comfortable at 85°, but the rest of my roommates take to the trampoline very quickly. Younger children can be harder to dislodge from your leg. Preschoolers, then, can put away silverware (sort out the knives first) and wipe down cabinets. From this mama’s perspective, children can and should contribute to household chores. Start them young, why not? If that teenager refuses to dislodge, then give them this choice, “You can stay inside and work or go outside.” Enjoy that alone time.

\(^8\) Purslane. This succulent grows naturally and abundantly in many parts of New Mexico.
4. Be a good neighbor.

My closest neighbors are in their seventies and eighties. After 13 years sandwiched between them we have developed understandings. Keep it quiet during the week, and share your gardens, your elbow grease, and your desserts. Early in this shutdown my neighbor Isabel called me around noon saying, “Maria Elena, don’t make dinner. I’m making you a shepherd’s pie, Linda.” It was an amazing gift to be able to take the rare afternoon nap. My advice is to support your neighbors during this time. If you do not know yours, perhaps it is a good time to meet them. Offer to grocery shop for the elderly, help clean the yard of a family with a newborn baby, or otherwise pay it forward with those around you.

Similarly, find ways to be a good neighbor in your larger community. La Mama is now a Rosie Respirator. I am making masks for my county’s employees and elderly.

5. Breathe in the fourth largest state.

Mandatory to every summer day in my house is recess. I am an early childhood educator, and our practice includes attending to physical well-being. More outdoor and movement time equals a good thing. When I feel the children have sat around too long, or perhaps are too loud, I tell them to “take a recess.” They know what this means. Go outside, now. I instituted recess during quarantine and it has been a success! Although I have gained at least ten pounds myself, Lilia, Estela and Roman are looking pretty lean. Running laps around the property line, riding their bikes, lifting weights, and even mowing the lawn (usually daddy’s job). Mama’s kids are looking good!

Typically on a summer day, I work until noon, make lunch, then take my children to play with the kittens at the local humane society, to sit in an air conditioned bookstore, or for a swim in the lake. Our options at this time have been greatly reduced, but they still exist. Get to your nearest river, lake, stream, acequia. Appreciate that your yard, town or whatever is still outlined by the aqueduct and terracing practices of our ancestors, who made living in our desert climate possible. Look up! Appreciate our New Mexico skies! Look at your local mountains. Walk in your area’s mountains. We are blessed to live in a state that offers many outdoor recreational opportunities. Whatever you decide to do outside, just remember to do it. Remember to take a recess.


Our New Mexico culture gets criticized as lax and experiencing “Mañana Syndrome.” However, there is something to be said about patience. A Norteno will not honk at you if you fail to immediately accelerate when a street light changes. Practice patience with our restaurant workers and everyone else visibly working during this time. Don’t verbally abuse the cashier anywhere. A true New Mexican says hello and thank you, and is understanding of the human plight. Yes, this germaphobe (side effect of years in early childhood education?)

9 Beautiful. A term of endearment in New Mexico.

10 Ditch.

11 A “do it tomorrow” mentality.
must take many, many deep breaths before leaving the house. But I tell myself to practice New Mexico values of live and let live. Call us last in education, income level, and all those statistics associated with highly-minoritized populations. But call us first in humanity. We will survive/thrive this pandemic because we respect ourselves and others enough to maintain civility (Thank you to all of you who have endured me during this time, BTW.).

Welcome an outsider. Now I personally have voiced my concerns about all the non-local traffic during these stay at home orders. But traditionally New Mexicans are known for our hospitality. We have welcomed every Georgia O’Keefe, Jack Nicholson and cross-country traveler. So instead of expressing aggression towards everyone without a land of enchantment license plate or those that refuse to wear a mask, let us practice our own New Mexico good manners and hygiene. Thank goodness for being a New Mexican! We have the right to live our truths and let others live theirs.

7. Break the rules.

I realize this list is untidy, with an uneven number of items that triggers my OCD. But it does adhere to early childhood education guidelines of ten norms or less! So #7, very important. Take a break from your routine once in a while. Lilia, Estela and Roman’s last day of school would have been field day, filled with hugs and hot dogs. Not so this year. To give them a little treat (They earned it. Eight weeks of self-guided learning.) we all stayed up until 2:00 a.m.

I cook most meals at home. Fridays we have happy hour. Everyone gets a treat and we get takeout. Even as tweens and teenagers my children look forward to Friday afternoon. Happy hour was observed during March, April and May, and will continue into June like it does every year. Add treats into your life.

That is my succinctish list of tips to summers at home with children. Perhaps you will hear my July tips next month. Until then, remember that we are ChiCANos not ChiCAN’Tos! Whether this is your first or your fifteenth summer at home, La Mama believes in you.
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About IFCE

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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