

WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

Counseling Department
Community Center Shanghai

Issue No.1



To arrange an appointment,
email counseling@communitycenter.cn,
call 13636317474,
or connect on WeChat.



This unique time period as we face the Coronavirus is unprecedented territory and has resulted in a myriad of adjustments and adaptations we all must make. The uncertainty and rapidly changing circumstances can produce a wide range of issues, responses, and emotions. It is normal to feel some degree of distress and disorganization. In the hopes of offering support to our community during this time, CCS is creating this Wellness Newsletter where CCS Counselors will address some of the challenges and difficulties that are common to many people. If you have an issue you would like to see featured in this newsletter, you can email counseling@communitycenter.cn. Also, if you feel you or someone you care about could benefit from additional support, CCS does have counselors available for virtual sessions via phone or video.

RELATIONSHIPS

Not everything about the Coronavirus situation has been bad. One of the good things that has come from it for many people is increased time together with family, whether that means immediate family or extended family (in-laws!) you may be staying with. Hopefully you are able to use this time to strengthen bonds and make special memories. However, reality is that sudden unexpected increased time together in close quarters during a stressful time period can result in challenges for relationships. Personality quirks may become grating, tempers may flare, arguments and disputes may arise, and there may sometimes be a general feeling of tension.

Here are some tips on how to cope and protect and preserve the relationship with those you care about:

- Manage expectations, both of yourself and of others. Sure, it would be nice if time together was all sunshine and flowers, but this isn't reality. If you accept that life isn't perfect, people aren't perfect, and relationships aren't perfect, it will be easier to navigate the rough patches.
- Remember this is a very stressful situation and give yourself and others some grace. We all have different thresholds for tolerating anxiety, uncertainty, and change. Most of us are coping the best we can. It is important to recognize and acknowledge this. Also remember, this is a time-limited situation. We will get through this and life will go back to "normal."
- Ask for what you need and allow others to ask for what they need. This may be extra support with the kids and e-learning, time alone, time to work in peace and quiet, or any number of things.
- When you need to address a difficult situation or voice a complaint, use softened or gentle start up. This means starting with the positive and then moving



on to state the issue. For example: I appreciate how hard you are working to support our family. I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed managing the kids and hope we can find a way to create a little more balance.

- Remember the 5:1 Golden Ratio. Studies have shown that the healthiest relationships have a ratio of at least five positive interactions/comments to every negative one.
 - Take time-outs. When an encounter becomes emotionally charged and the conversation is no longer productive, it is okay and healthy to ask for some time for all parties to cool down and self-soothe. Do be sure to follow up afterwards though.
 - Don't be afraid to apologize – and be willing and ready to accept apologies. When emotions are intense, it is easy to say things we don't mean or act in ways we wouldn't usually act. Accepting responsibility for your role in conflict and offering a sincere apology can be very powerful and transforming thing.
- By being intentional about your relationships and interactions, this unique time period can result not only in a greater quantity of time together with family, but also can enhance the quality of these relationships.

Carrie Jones, LCSW
Director of Counseling, CCS

E-LEARNING



As wonderful as it is to have e-learning as an option during this unique time period, we also recognize that it can be stressful for families for a number of reasons. Most parents aren't trained teachers and many don't feel equipped to teach their children in an academic context. Some families have more than one child and thus must manage the workloads and expectations of various grade levels. On top of this, many parents are trying to continue their own jobs, whether onsite or online. The various time zones and environments we find ourselves scattered throughout further add to the complexity. Combined with the other stressors related to Coronavirus and the general stress of life, the pressure of e-learning can exacerbate other issues individuals may have - feelings of resentment when one partner has to manage most of the homeschooling, feelings of insecurity and a sense of struggling to teach even very young children since we were taught differently back when we were in school. If you are feeling any of this, know that you aren't the only one and keep the following thoughts in mind.

Remember that you don't have to be Super Parent-Teacher...now or ever. Be realistic with the expectation you set for yourself and your child. Perfectionism leads to burnout, anxiety, depression, and other negative outcomes. It is perfectly fine and healthy to be a good-enough parent, teacher, student, or whatever your role may be. Also, don't feel like you have to shoulder the burden alone. If possible, divide up teaching duties with your spouse. Also, pull in support from other family member and friends who have expertise or interest in any given subject.

Feel free to do what works best for you and your child(ren). You don't have to stick to traditional school hours or schedules. In fact, many studies have shown traditional school hours actually aren't the optimal learning hours, particularly for teens. Now is your time to implement all the reforms and changes you and your children have ever wished for relating to school and education!

Finally, remember it is critical to take care of yourself emotionally so you can take care of your kids. Here are some online Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy resources you can use on your own if you find yourself feeling overwhelmed or stressed out or struggling with other issues: <http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/resources/consumers.cfm>

CBT can be very helpful for kids too in managing their emotions

Here are a few worksheets you can use with your kiddos:

<https://www.communitycentershanghai.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/wheel-of-emotions-children.pdf>

<https://www.communitycentershanghai.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cbt-for-kids.pdf>

<https://www.communitycentershanghai.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/how-i-feel-cbt-tool.pdf>

<https://www.communitycentershanghai.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/where-do-i-feel.pdf>

If you would like to connect with other parents for additional tips, resources, and support, we welcome you to join the CCS E-learning WeChat group. Best wishes as you embark on this new adventure!

Carrie Jones, LCSW
Director of Counseling, CCS



USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Prior to Coronavirus outbreak, the extensive use of social media was already a problem and now it has become a more serious one. On the surface, social media use seems to healthy and normal, as it is a main source of virus updates and medical tips, and we may not currently have much else to occupy our time inside our homes. However, when social media becomes addictive, it prevents us from drawing close to our family and friends, performing well at work, staying calm and balanced, and from many things more deserving our attention.

Our brain functions in such a way that we make new assumptions and connections based on new information presented to us. This allows people to be creative, artistic, and successful in many ways. However, when we perceive something dangerous, these assumptions can become a source of anxiety, stress or anger. In the current situation, many of our negative feelings are the result of both the quality and quantity of information related to the virus that we are taking in from social media. These negative feelings will not subside unless we are intentional about recognizing and processing them and make changes in our use of social media.



Throughout history in public crises it has been common for false information to spread quickly and widely and the age of social media has only exacerbated this phenomenon. When we know little about what is happening or is going to happen, it is important to identify a few reliable news outlets and to rely primarily on them for information. In a crisis like the one we currently face, the main reason we need information is

to allow ourselves to take necessary and reasonable protections, not to become an expert or a prophet for others. Blocking yourself from unverified chats, screenshots, and random accounts doesn't make you ignorant. Rather, it a healthy and wise thing to do given the situation. When you are unsure if something disturbing you heard is true or not, better to verify the information directly from a trusted source or expert rather than crowd-sourcing it before a large audience and stirring up unnecessary fear and anxiety.

Coronavirus forces us to take an extended "break" from whatever we were previously doing, but how and where we now invest our time and attention is still up to us.

Scott Shen, LSW
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