**Coping With Stress During The Coronavirus**

Paul Peavy, MS, LMHC, Mental Health Coordinator

As the saying goes, “What a time to be alive!” Man, there are all kinds of crazy things going on around you and you don’t even know what’s going to change next. Here are some tips on how to handle this crazy time.

1. It’s okay to not know. The truth is none of us have ever known the future. We have always counted on routine and knowing that our schedules would remain the same. Now is a time to expect the unexpected. Don’t get your heels dug in about being sure what’s going to happen next. If you expect the unexpected it’s easier to accept when a change does occur.
2. Find the positive. Many people are finding ways to re-create positive relationships, get more exercise, learn magic tricks, learn a new hobby… This is a time that allows you to do some things you previously did not. Even keeping a gratitude journal by writing three things you are grateful for in the morning and three things you are grateful for in the evening can change your focus. You definitely become what you think. (Unless you think you are gerbil. You will not become a gerbil.)
3. Write down your negative thoughts and crumple them up and throw them away. Sometimes our minds get stuck on negative things but if we write them down it can give our brain permission to let it go. Also if you take your worse thoughts out to the end you can see how impossible things would have to be for that to happen. For instance, “Wow! The world is going end! Well if that happens at least I won’t have to clean my room.”
4. Be kind to your parents, your guardians, your siblings! I’ll say it louder for the people in the back. **Be kind to your parents, your guardians, your siblings!** Y’all are all basically stuck on a boat together. Think of their feelings, think of their stress, just think of them and their feelings and needs also. You will be surprised how things can smooth out when you apologize for something you’ve done or be the first one to reach out to play with your younger sibling or do a chore without being asked.
5. Find something fun to do with your family. Bake, play a game, learn something together. This can go a long way in reducing stress in the house and adding some laughter.
6. Don’t watch a news channel all the time. When things change you will be notified. News channels are paid to create news and drama 24 hours a day. This can be frightening and overwhelming for your brain. Turn it off and check in only occasionally.
7. Ever been told to just take a chill pill and breath? Okay I don’t have a chill pill (Unless you consider a Gummi Bear a chill pill, which it actually might be for some.). The breathing part is real but you need to do it more than just when you are feeling stressed. A study found that people who practiced deep breathing patterns twice a day for fifteen minutes a day shrunk the anxiety producing part of their brain. Try starting with breathing in for 6, holding for 6, and exhaling for 6. Doing it as you go to sleep may give you a better nights rest and programming your thoughts with calming scenes of your “happy place” may make it even more relaxing.
8. Get in touch with your spirituality. I can’t push any particular religion here but research does indicate that people who have a spiritual peace and pray or meditate with that are happier. The people at Alcoholics Anonymous used the phrase “Higher Power” to help people figure out how to start their own spiritual journey.
9. Do NOT get your sleep flipped upside down. Staying up until 4:00 am may sound cool but deep night time sleep is necessary for good physical, emotional, and mental health. The latest research so that the brain actively flushes negative juices (my word not science’s word) out of your brain while you sleep. So think about that, if you don’t get the sleep you need your walking around with a brain that has not had all that negative stuff flushed out! Be responsible and please flush!
10. Don’t hesitate to reach out for help. Talk to a family member, a friend or use one of the following resources :

Below is a list of some of the providers that have developed a trusted, professional relationship with Taylor County Schools:

**A New Dawn A New Beginning:** 850-329-5776   
[anewdawnanewbeginning.com](http://anewdawnanewbeginning.com/)  
  
**Apalachee Mental Health Services:** 850-584-5613

**Disc Village**: 850-838-2525  
  
**Community Wellness:** 850-644-7724  
[cwcssbehavioralhealth.com](http://cwcssbehavioralhealth.com/)  
  
**Florida Therapy:**  850-878-0494  
[Flatherapy.com](http://flatherapy.com/)

 If you or anyone you know is feeling suicidal or in need of help please text or call:

The National Suicide Prevention Hotline

1-800-273-8255

Or Text “Help” To The National Crisis Text Line

741741

 For more help or information please feel free to contact Paul Peavy, Taylor County Mental Health Coordinator at [paul.peavy@taylor.k12.fl.us](mailto:paul.peavy@taylor.k12.fl.us).