



# CARING FOR ALPS

Health Information For Clients and Their Families

## SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WITH IDD

Last issue we talked about supporting understanding by sticking to clear facts while practicing social distancing and hygiene at home so that we can become more comfortable with the new expectations. In this issue, let us look at dealing with our emotions and how to cope while we work on maintaining a routine. The following strategies are geared towards caregivers supporting the individual with IDD, but in reality they are helpful to just about anyone. We are all vulnerable in times of uncertainty, so I write this article through both the view of a caregiver and an individual.

### Offering Opportunities For Expression

Talking about feelings such as sadness or fear can be hard. Sometimes when we have to deal with our emotions it is easier to act out our frustration by hitting things or avoiding situations and people. If we can take the time to express our thoughts and feelings more often, we can lessen the chance of ending in a meltdown. Try making time daily to talk to a friend, write in a journal, or play a game. Playing music, dancing, and yoga are great stress relievers as well as expressing yourself through art. Resorting to challenging behavior can be a way to communicate feelings of anxiety or fear so having a few coping skills that you have practiced and can rely on is a good plan. So what coping skills do you already use?

1

STRESS LESS

2

KEEP ACTIVE

3

BE HEALTHY

### EXPRESS YOURSELF



### PRACTICE COPING SKILLS



### MAINTAIN ROUTINE



# WEARING MASKS

*Keeps Everyone Safe!*



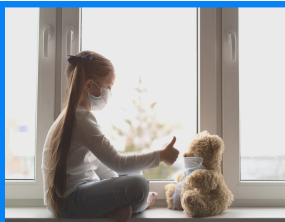
People all around me are wearing masks to keep each other safe from germs.



I can also wear a mask, so I do not catch or spread these germs. If I need help putting it on, I will ask for help.



I can practice wearing a mask at home. I can even try to put it on my favorite doll or stuffed animal.



My mask should cover my nose, mouth and chin, and will tie in the back of my head or have elastic to go around my ears.



## Prioritize Coping And Calming Skills

Supporting individuals with Intellectual disabilities to use their calming strategies is especially important now with COVID-19. These may include encouraging rocking in a chair, listening to music on headphones, deep breathing, watching videos, and short periods of exercise. If coping or calming strategies are not yet part of the routine, start teaching or learning these skills. I have talked before about creating a coping skills tool box. If you don't have one creating one is a great activity. And having one is not only great for when anxiety peaks, I find it to be great as a boredom buster as well and pull it out while waiting for appointments or activities that I know may prove difficult for my own child. If

you find that restlessness is becoming more frequent, try adding more opportunities during the day for practicing calm, even schedule it if needed. Calm, Headspace, Breathe2Relax, Pacifica, [fragrantheart.com](https://www.fragrantheart.com), and RainRain are just some free apps that teach the art of creating calm, which can help.

## Maintain Routines

It is helpful to allow everyone in a household to cope in a way that works best for them. One way to help maintain normalcy is by keeping to your routine as much as possible. This can be very comforting. For example, instead of skipping a weekly visit to the park because you are concerned about exposure risk, try creating a backyard obstacle course

to keep active at home. Some routines are more important than others to maintain such as sleeping and waking at the same time, exercising or being physically active for 30 minutes a day, and doing household chores. Creating a visual schedule that you post in a bedroom or on the refrigerator and using it through out the day to reinforce routine can help encourage being active while keeping anxiety down.

### Are YOU Stressed?

Feeling hopeless as a caregiver can often feed into the anxiety of those for whom we care. Some people question how bad would it be if my family contracted COVID? The anxiety created by thinking about the what ifs can be overwhelming. Social distancing works. If you haven't had the virus and

your family doesn't have the virus you have already lowered the probability of contracting COVID-19 by staying home and limiting contact with other people. As caregivers, having to restrict your movements and adjust to the new norm can be frustrating to both you and the individual with IDD who may not understand why we are all home instead of attending program. Try to emphasize the heroic aspect of staying home to keep everyone safe. Remember- emotions are contagious. As a caregiver, patience is essential in dealing with other's grief reactions such as denial, anger, and sadness before acceptance of this new norm. Repeat alternative activities and reasons for distancing. And when logic fails, turn to distraction such as a favorite tv show or activity to get through difficult moments.



Masks come in all colors and patterns.



If it is difficult or uncomfortable wearing a mask I can try for short periods of time first and then build up to longer amounts of time.



If it hurts to have the elastic behind my ears, I can try it with buttons on my favorite hat or headband.



The more I practice wearing my mask, the easier it will be. Wearing masks helps to keep everyone safe.



### REMEMBER:

stay safe and wear a mask.

Created by the Autism Society of America in collaboration with Julie O'Malley and Dr. Marc Ellison of Marshall University. Dr. Ellison is a member of the Autism Society of America's Panel of Professional Advisors.



## Talking Fun At The Beach with Michelle R.

Michelle recently met up with our DSP Ashley on Zoom and they talked about this month's theme "Fun In The Sun At The Beach."

**When Michelle goes to the beach she brings a:**

1. Blanket
2. Shovel and bucket
3. Snacks
4. Sunscreen
5. Bathing suit
6. Book for the car ride
7. Folding chair
8. Pair of sunglasses
9. Beach toys
10. Beach ball

**Can you think of anything else to bring to the beach?**



**Michelle sees many things at the beach. Here is what she sees:**

1. Seas shells
2. Waves
3. Sand
4. Life guards
5. Crabs
6. Sea weed
7. Jelly fish
8. Lots of people
9. Beach balls
10. Umbrellas

**What do you see when you go to the beach?**



Hello. My name is Joanne Mintzas and I am the Care Manager, RN for St. John of God. Consider me a resource if you need support in completing your annual paperwork, have a medical question, or are seeking services with a health aspect.

A little about me: I have a BS in Foods and Nutrition, a BS in Nursing, and a MS in management.

I have previous experience as a dementia nurse, a mental health nurse, and I worked at ADS as a part time school nurse prior to taking on this role.

I can be reached by email at [jmintzas@sjogcs.org](mailto:jmintzas@sjogcs.org)

Phone: 856-848-4700 x1227



St. John of God Community Services

