



CARING FOR ALPS

Health Information For Clients and Their Families

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WITH IDD

In this issue we wrap up talking about how to support someone with IDD during a pandemic by talking about building new routines, fostering connections from a distance, and being aware of changing behaviors.



Building New Routines

With so many demands, maintaining your routine is probably near impossible, but that doesn't mean you can't create a new, more manageable routine with a structure similar to attending program. A few things you can do at home is to first provide choices about what activities will be tackled

and then set a schedule and space to perform those activities. Including online activities from websites is great, just try not to depend solely on online resources. If you need help weening off of screen-time, try using a visual timer or a picture schedule with something more fun to do after being online in order to make the transition a positive one.

The transition to and from program was once a daily adventure in itself which provided fresh air, short walks and seeing familiar sights and faces. Try adding a morning walk or get creative by planning a path around your home to move through as a start to your daily routine. Post pictures of sights that would normally be passed on the way to SJOG such as the post office, police station, or a park and practice greeting the people you would normally see. However you plan your daily routine, be sure to include 30 minutes of physical activity.

Fostering Connections

Social isolation and loneliness is unfortunately common for people with IDD

1

STRESS LESS

2

KEEP ACTIVE

3

BE HEALTHY

THE SUPERHERO IN YOU



We all have the power to make a difference

NEW ROUTINES & CONNECTIONS



Putting it all together

ZOOMING ALONG



Staff comments on the experience

and may be worsened when the need to stay home is enforced. Positive social support is important for everyone during this period and figuring out how to make social connections continue can be tricky. It is understandable that many of us are not tech savvy and learning how to use ZOOM, Skype and all the other forms of alternative communication can be overwhelming. I know many of us have probably gone week by week thinking the end is near and yet here we are over four months later and still with no clear understanding of how we will continue to spend our time be it at home or back at program.



If getting online is proving difficult, there are other means of staying social. For example heading outside to people-watch and wave or say hello to people passing by is also a way to stay connected. Driveways, yards and sidewalks make it easier to set boundaries while allowing neighbors and friends to get outside and catch up on life events. Remember to get outside as much as possible and find ways to communicate through alternate forms such as chalk messages on the driveway, dropping a handwritten letter in the mailbox, or creating lawn displays for all to see.

These are great ways to connect with our communities but I would be naive to not acknowledge that at this point, the internet, with the use of ZOOM and similar media is likely to prove the best type of interaction second to actual in person connections for many who just cant get outside enough. Try practicing with these sites and getting your loved one comfortable reconnecting with friends online. I can say firsthand, that when I attend the SJOG ZOOM parties, I can feel the delight I see in the smiles of even our nonverbal clients who are absolutely benefiting from seeing the familiar faces of their program friends and staff.



Be Aware of Changing Behaviors

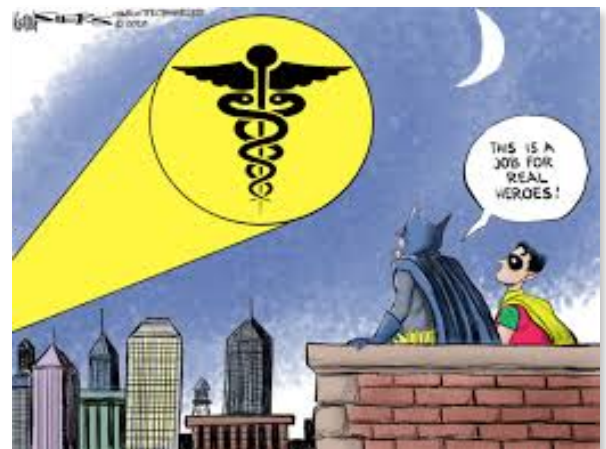
Lastly, let us address the importance of paying attention to how people with IDD communicate fear, frustration, and anxiety. Often, a change in sleeping or eating patterns, an increase in repetitive behaviors, excessive worry or agitation and irritability, or a decrease in self-care can be the tell tale of something stressing the individual. Be aware that most mental health providers and non-urgent care medical providers are offering services

via tele-health, and emergency legislation has expanded insurance coverage (including Medicaid) for these options.

The Superhero In You

The COVID-19 pandemic has been teaching some valuable lessons while reminding us to slow down and focus on our self care needs. It has also brought to light how interdependent we all are on each other's actions and choices.

A client in the VR program recently asked to have a Zoom session about superheroes and while preparing how to incorporate superheroes into a work program I



was quickly realizing that we all have superhero qualities in our everyday lives and COVID-19 is just another opportunity to showcase them.

Superheroes all have different superpowers, but what they have in common is their willingness to defend humanity against evils bigger than any of us, and they do it as a team. Perhaps the values our make-believe superheroes stand for can provide us insight about who we are, how to discover our own strengths and then use them for a good purpose. Here at St. John of God, staff has had to adjust how we exemplify the values and mission we embrace. Nonetheless, we continue to put the needs of those we serve first in our efforts to provide meaningful connections amongst staff and clients while we work on creating a safe environment in which to return. There will no doubt be many lessons from this challenging moment in our history. Perhaps the biggest lesson of this crisis will be about our ability to unite before a threat that does not discriminate, and the amazing ways we can support each other.

This crisis is full of heroes on all levels. One example is our essential and front line workers who continue to work and put themselves out there in service to others. Every act of kindness, whether donating food or money is also helping remind us of who we can be. On another level, yet equally important, is the time people take to check in on a neighbor or loved ones. The errands run on behalf of someone else who is more vulnerable and should stay home can make a significant impact on their health and safety. Remember that every one of us staying at home is helping to keep someone else safe. We are all superheroes indeed.

*Pastoral Care is available to support you. 856-848-4700 ext. 1207



Our DSPs have been working hard providing services to clients via ZOOM. I asked what they feel is "super" about that time...

It is SUPER seeing everyone's smiling faces and being able to communicate remotely and safely- Ashlee

Seeing their face light up every time despite how they miss program. They are so excited and happy, even if its only 15 minutes once or twice a week- Lovell

I just love that I get to see their faces!- Lois

How we put a smile on their face when they see us- Stephanie

It is fulfilling to see all my clients and fills the void of not being in program- Kiara

How it makes them feel important that we take the time to make them happy and check in on them. They always have a smile on their face because of our time together- Myranda



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

Phone: 856-848-4700 x1227



St. John of God Community Services

