

Attention Pleasant Valley Pre-K-2nd grade Families!
We would like to offer Mental Health Support Services to our students and their families during this difficult time. Pleasant Valley Primary Counselor, Ms. Wisnu Meier, is available by phone and email Monday-Thursday from 9:00am-1:00pm during our school shut down.
Phone 309-472-0798 email wmeier@pv62.com

Attention Pleasant Valley 3rd-8th grade Families!
Our Intermediate Counselor, Mr. Osterloo, is available by phone or email Mon, Tue, Thursdays and Fridays from 8:00am-1:00pm during our school shutdown for mental health support services.

Phone 679-0634 ext 301 email dosterloo@pv62.com

If you are struggling with * stress, anxiety, anger, sadness, OR *need help explaining to your children what we are experiencing, feel free to reach out. We are here to help.

15 MINDFUL WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC—compiled by Wisnu Meier. Just FYI, my approach is always influenced by mindfulness and utilizing mind-body connection to improve our overall wellbeing.

1. Check within. Take a moment to pause and check in with yourself. Ask, “How am I doing?” Before you ask someone else “how are you doing?” Be your own best friend by being interested in your wellbeing. In regards to coping with the uncertainty of the current situation, ask yourself the following questions and then journal your answers. Evaluate if you are indeed supporting or defeating yourself.

- a. What are my thoughts about this? (example: this is awful...this shouldn't happened, etc.)

- b. What feelings do I notice? (frustrated, sad, overwhelmed, fearful/worried, irritable, or at ease?)

- c. What behavior do I find myself doing? (Panic buying? Watching the news closely? Other?)

- d. What kind of images do I conjure up in mind regarding the situation? (I get sick, someone I love gets sick, I lost my job, I lost income, etc. or I will be okay, I have overcome many things before)

- e. What physical sensations do I have when I think about this issues and imagine the worst case scenarios in my mind? (I feel tightness in my body, a knot in my stomach, rapid heartbeat, sighing a lot?)

2. Remember that our thoughts (what we tell ourselves) and the images we have in our mind affect our emotions, physiological response, and stress level. Our brain cannot distinguish between real or imagined events. It will always respond as if it is happening right here and now. If we imagine negative/scary/catastrophic events, the brain will send signals to our body to prepare for fight/flight/freeze response (stress response—which lowers/suppresses immune system). So be mindful of your thoughts and the images in your mind. Choose pleasant images and uplifting thoughts instead. Such as “We can all get through this. We can focus on what we can control. We can focus on being grateful for what we can still do, what we have, etc.”
3. If you are living with FEAR (Fantasized Experiences Appearing Real) than you may experience unnecessary anxiety and depression, you are not living in the present moment. If you are living in the present moment and from a place that only holds loving kindness, you will experience more inner peace regardless of what is going on around you.
4. When you wash your hands: say metta prayers (from yoga tradition): “May I be healthy, may I be well, may be at ease, may I be safe, and may I be filled and peace and loving kindness.” Then say the same for loved ones “May my family....may my friends...” Do the same when taking showers.

5. Eat well-balanced meals and drink plenty of water. Reduce processed foods and sweets consumption. Eat slowly and mindfully, using all your senses while savoring your food.
6. Improve sleep by writing down what you are grateful for today, what went well, what you have accomplished, what blessings you noticed throughout the day, what difference you have made in others' lives. They don't have to be big things, small things count, too. Example: "I did some exercise this morning, I made someone smile, I shared a good idea with a friend, I drove safely to and from work, I noticed the sunshine, I am blessed with a comfy bed, etc.)
7. Use affirmations such as "My body is healthy. I am resilient. I give my body permission to relax. I give my mind permission to take a break. I can choose to take a break from watching the news. I can focus on what is still good in my life. I can focus on what I can control and can do right now. I will love myself even more this time. I can connect with loved ones more intentionally now. I am taking good care of myself. I am loved no matter what. etc."
8. Do some form of physical activities such as gentle yoga, stretching, aerobic exercise, walking, running, swimming, dancing, etc.
9. Listen to uplifting songs or sing them out loud. Listen to the sound of nature.
10. Tend to your plants. Enjoy nature in real life or on in your devices (YouTube is a good source) or imagine them in your mind. Enjoy your hobby such as knitting, adult coloring, doing puzzles (all of which has calming effects on our mind and body)
11. Watch funny movies. Read funny stories or uplifting stories. Laugh as much as possible. It really is the best medicine.
12. Learn to meditate. If you cannot do it on your own, look up "guided meditations" or "guided visualizations" on YouTube. Choose what works for you.
13. Noticing that your mind is racing? Anchor your mind by practicing square breathing: inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, exhale for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, repeat from beginning and do it 4 times.
14. Practice HeartMath (without any device for biofeedback) by inhaling and exhaling as slowly as you can while imagining a calming, serene, happy image, and feeling a positive emotions (smiling for no reason works well). Practice the whole thing for 2-3 minutes. Notice how you feel afterwards. Repeat often.
15. Surrender. Release the need to control the outcome or the event. Release the need to blame, to fix things, or to be responsible for something you cannot control. Remove the words "should and have to" and replace with "want and get to." Example, instead of saying "I should be careful" say "I want to be careful" or "I get to do this more carefully." Neuroscience shows that words can change our brain.

If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact me at 309-472-0798.

Wisnu Meier, MA, NCC, LCPC
Inward Journey Counseling--inwardjourneycounseling.com
Ph. 309-472-0798
7501 N. University St. Suite 225, Peoria, IL 61614