

Update from the DC CoP

Promoting Wellness Tips for the DC CoP Community April 8, 2020

Thank you to Michelle Kelsey Mitchell, Director of Partnerships at Pure Edge, Inc., for her presentation during a chat for the D.C. School Behavioral Health Community of Practice (DC CoP) Community on practical tips and practices that support wellness. Pure Edge is a national foundation that promotes social emotional learning initiatives in organizations such as school districts, nonprofit organizations, state agencies, and more. For more information on Pure Edge, please visit: <https://pureedgeinc.org/>

Throughout the 90-minute chat, participants were asked to share wellness strategies they are employing with students, families, colleagues, and themselves. What follows is a series of questions and answers generated by and for the DC CoP.

Engaging Families and Students in Wellness Practices

What strategies have you tried or are you using during social distancing to engage families/students with wellness?

- Send “Mindfulness Monday” emails to help families center on a thought or topic for that week and to initiate mindfulness practices.
- Let families know that we are in this together and share key resources with them.
- Check in with clients and talk about their preferred strategies; be conscious when working with clients – especially those who have experienced trauma – because some techniques can trigger previous experiences and feelings.

What are some client techniques and strategies that have worked during these challenging times?

- Determine if clients require calming techniques or energy release. It can be helpful to spend some time redirecting energy or a specific behavior. It’s important to observe the preferences of the person you are working with and consult with them about their preferences.
- Share stretching techniques or other activities that help center oneself.



- Encourage clients to practice breathing exercises to connect body and mind, and to manage stress and anxiety. Ask students to picture a pinwheel or flower as a visual aid to help them with deep breathing. This is particularly helpful when speaking with a client on the phone.

What technology strategies are helpful during challenging times to create wellness?

- Pre-work is important since spotty Internet connections often interfere with a session. Some examples include texting images ahead of time, emailing information, talking on the phone if that works better than a web-based platform, and having back-up plans as appropriate.
- Use phone calls or video platforms (e.g., Zoom) to engage clients. Google Voice is helpful to call and connect with clients.
- Create a professional Instagram account to engage with students and to share social emotional learning materials.
- Google Classroom, ClassDojo, and Blackboard are great for continuing to do Tier 1 wellness promotion activities with students and parents. Some schools have created one-pagers with information and instructions about how families can connect to these platforms and distributed the materials at meal pick-up sites.

What are some strategies to help caregivers with their children?

- Help educate caregivers on how to support their own or their child's mental health by sending them information or talking to them about it.
- Remember that parents may be feeling overwhelmed and unsure about how to best help their child when they have challenges, and then provide them with support and information on techniques they can use.
- Practice mindfulness activities, such as daily breathing exercises, with caregivers to help them manage their stress. These activities can also be useful for the caregiver and student to do together and can help them connect with their child.
- Help caregivers develop consistent routines, rituals, or schedules for their children.

Incorporating Staff and Clinician Wellness into Daily Practice

What is one strategy you could see using the most or would be most beneficial in your daily practice?

- Conduct deep breathing activities; that small investment of time can have a big impact on other aspects of work and life.
- Take time for ourselves because it is crucial that we take time to repair and be whole to function.
- Start and end each day with an "attitude of gratitude" and share this with families.
- Be more intentional about scheduling and incorporating "me time."
- Remember that the body and mind are connected.

What are some wellness techniques that would work with distance learning and how can we incorporate some of these strategies into our practice?

- It can be powerful when we are in tune with our bodies and focus on where we feel emotions in our bodies.
- Be gentle on ourselves during this time; don't be too hard on yourself.
- We are in the "helping" business, but we also need to be mindful about taking care of ourselves first so we are in a position to help others. Small things count and little techniques to take care of yourself do matter.
- Breathing exercises and at-home yoga sessions can help.
- Taking time to decompress and connect with others is just as important as physical activity and sleep; all aspects of "The Healthy Mind Platter" (see below) are important.

Supporting Colleagues with Wellness

How does one best promote staff/team wellness in a remote working climate?

- Send staff funny, thoughtful, or "just because" e-cards that thank them for what they are doing.
- Remind others to be present in the moment and during crisis.
- Offer a listening ear and encouraging words.
- Maintain an "attitude of gratitude" and model this for staff members. Take a moment to remind staff about the importance of taking time to care for oneself.
- Use mindfulness techniques and practice deep breathing to help retain your own balance and to re-energize.

The Healthy Mind Platter



"The Healthy Mind Platter" is the work of Daniel J. Siegel, M.D., who studies child development and the brain. Dr. Siegel's work was highlighted by a DC CoP member during a chat and was explained in more detail by Dr. Mitchell during the April 8 chat. Dr. Siegel found that the interconnectedness of children and adults is imperative to healthy development. The Healthy Mind Platter consists of seven daily essential mental activities to optimize brain matter and create well-being. Learn more [here](#).

1. Focus Time: When we closely focus on tasks in a goal-oriented way, we take on challenges that make deep connections in the brain.
2. Play Time: When we allow ourselves to be spontaneous or creative, playfully enjoying novel experiences, we help make new connections in the brain.
3. Connecting Time: When we connect with other people, ideally in person, and when we take time to appreciate our connection to the natural world around us, we activate and reinforce the brain's relational circuitry.
4. Physical Time: When we move our bodies, aerobically if medically possible, we strengthen the brain in many ways.
5. Time In: When we quietly reflect internally, focusing on sensations, images, feelings and thoughts, we help to better integrate the brain.
6. Down Time: When we are non-focused, without any specific goal, and let our mind wander or simply relax, we help the brain recharge.
7. Sleep Time: When we give the brain the rest it needs, we consolidate learning and recover from the experiences of the day.