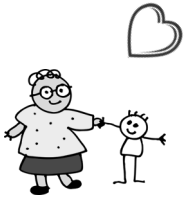


# GRANDparents Connection



For Grandparents Raising Grandchildren



## The Importance of Emotional Wellness

Dear Grandparents,

Emotional wellness influences and contributes to overall wellness and because so many Americans, of all ages, are reporting struggles with their emotional well-being it is important to be aware and actively taking care of this area of wellness. The isolation from the pandemic and its emotional toll continues for some of us and for others it has contributed to anxiety and depression. The many ways you care for yourself should include eating a nutrient dense diet, exercising, relaxing, getting quality sleep and spending time with friends and family socially.

In order to care for your grandchild properly, make *all* areas of wellness a priority including social, emotional, intellectual, physical, professional, financial, environmental and spiritual wellness. Of course, it is easy in theory to make changes for better health but sticking with them may not be as easy. Consider the safety talk on airplanes when you start to put your own good health aside; the airline personnel instruct you to put your oxygen mask on before assisting others. If you are not caring for yourself then caring for others is going to be near impossible. Don't feel guilty about caring for yourself and the time it may take away from other things, remember your family needs you and finding time for self-care will help them too.

In this newsletter we will look at the importance of caring for yourself and how emotional wellness can support you as a caregiver to be healthy and more fulfilled. Try to find time to maintain your emotional wellness with things that bring you joy and give you a reprieve from daily stressors.

*Christine Zellers, MPP*

FCHS Educator /Assistant Professor  
Family and Community Health Sciences  
Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Cape May County  
609-465-5115, Ext. 3609  
zellers@njaes.rutgers.edu

This newsletter was written in collaboration with Nicole Paladines, Stockton University Public Health Intern.

## ***The 8 Dimensions of Wellness***



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Association (SAMHSA) has 8 Dimensions of Wellness. These are physical, emotional, social, occupational, intellectual, spiritual, environment and financial. Wellness is not just physical and mental well-being but achieving balance and happiness in 8 areas so that you are physically and mentally sound. It's important to note that achieving all 8 of these dimensions may not be easy and could require some changes in habits and even support and help from others both personally or professionally. Be aware of the 8 dimensions to assist with setting overall wellness goals that are practical and realistic.

Emotional wellness can often be overlooked, but is important to prioritize. When attempting to achieve mental wellness, think about what makes you happy and at peace. Surround yourself with people that you can comfortably communicate with about your feelings.

There are stereotypes that improving your emotional wellness involves only seeing therapists or taking medications. While that is an option, sometimes talking to friends and family or joining a support group that you feel comfortable with could help you to feel better. Although, if you do talk to your loved ones and still feel unwell emotionally it may be time to seek the help of a professional so that they can provide you with coping skills to manage your everyday life better.

***You never know when those around you are going through similar emotions. Don't let your feelings overwhelm you and talk to a family member, friend, or neighbor!***

### ***How to improve emotional wellness...***

Not sure where to start? That is perfectly fine, taking small steps to improve your emotional wellness is a great start that can contribute to lasting success with the emotional dimension of wellness. Just like physical wellness sometimes emotional wellness requires seeking professional help. If your moods have changed drastically or if you feel blue frequently, talk to a medical professional for additional help. This could mean seeing a therapist and taking steps to create better emotional wellness.

Even if you feel emotionally well now, its important to take care of your emotional health by doing things that are preventative just like you would do for your physical health. Having a daily routine is important and if you don't already have a daily routine, start one to create a sense of control and stability. It doesn't have to be a strict routine, but you can start off by setting a specific bedtime to ensure you get enough sleep or take time to meal plan for the week, so you are sure to get a nutritious meal each day. Eating a healthy nutrient dense diet and getting the right sleep reduces stress and can be two easy steps to maintain good emotional wellness.

***Remember to put your oxygen mask on before helping others. In other words, take care of yourself before taking care of others so that you are able to help them.***

## ***How to improve emotional wellness...***

Managing stress levels is important for emotional wellness but that may be easier said than done, however it can be accomplished with a little planning and routine. Recognize your stress triggers and plan to avoid or cope with daily stressors. For instance, if bedtime for the children is stressful try to develop a different routine or look for what makes that task stressful so that you can change it to be less taxing. Another way to avoid daily stressors is to acknowledge what makes you upset and try to reason it out with yourself, is it something that can be dealt with another day, is there another way to cope with that stressor or can you take a walk clear your mind and think of a different approach. Try to talk to a trusted friend or family member to work through your stress and if your stressors become unmanageable seek professional help. Writing in a journal to record your feelings and thoughts can help release bottled up emotions and better prepare you to cope with them. Practice relaxation techniques such as taking deep and slow breaths to clear your mind or take time to sit quietly for 5-10 minutes every day to reduce stress.

Always look on the bright side, finding the negative in the day sets a trend for us to feel and behave negatively, try to find what you learn in experiences or what came from the situation that could be a positive. A positive mindset can help us live a healthier life and decrease the risk for chronic disease. Research shows that having a purpose in life can reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease, stroke, and a heart attack (Bar-Tur, 2021). Taking time for yourself daily is something that gets overlooked. Try to do something that is fun and interesting that meets your needs and incorporate it into your daily routine to support a positive outlook.

Physical activity is not just beneficial for the body but for the mind too. Yoga and walking are great ways to improve your emotional wellness. Walking for a few minutes every day could change your emotional outlook and exercise can reduce or prevent the symptoms of depression and anxiety. Recent studies have shown walking in nature can reduce stress, try to take the kids for a walk in the woods or on a beach to enjoy your surroundings and de-stress the entire family.

Eliminating or decreasing alcohol, drug and nicotine use will significantly improve both physical and mental health. Removing substances can decrease mood swings and cognitive decline. Replace substance use with healthy habits and a better mood. Like other aspects of emotional wellness you may need professional help to remove substances from your life.



### **Senior Centers offer a variety of activities and opportunities for socialization.**

#### **Lower Cape Senior Center**

2612 Bayshore Road  
Villas, NJ 08251  
Phone: 609-886-5161

#### **De Vico Senior Center Middle Township**

23 Romney Place  
CMCH, NJ 08210  
Phone: 609-465-8865

#### **North Wildwood Senior Center**

10th and Central Avenues  
North Wildwood, NJ 08260  
Phone: 609-522-7611

#### **Howard S. Stainton Senior Center Ocean City**

1735 Simpson Avenue  
Ocean City, NJ 08226  
Phone: 609-399-0055

#### **Upper Township Senior Center**

1369 Old Stagecoach Road  
Palermo, NJ 08230  
Phone: 609-390-9409

### **How to Meditate...**

Meditation is often a difficult practice to master, especially if your mind is racing and you are stressed. However, it is called mindful meditation *practice* because you need to practice it over and over. It does not mean that you must clear thoughts from your head because thoughts constantly pop into our mind, that is how our brain is set up to function. Rather than trying to clear your mind try to be aware of what does come up when trying to meditate and simply let it go or swipe it from your mind. A good way to learn to meditate is to close your eyes and just simply breathe. Follow the pattern of your breath as you inhale and exhale. If a thought pops into your mind, then recognize it is there and go back to following the pattern of your breathing – inhale then exhale. You can start out by doing this for five minutes a day and build to a longer time if it works for you. Doing mindful meditation for 5-10 minutes a day can help your emotional wellness. It may make you less likely to respond quickly in stressful situations and can help you to build patience when things become difficult. Guided meditation can help you get started as well, UC San Diego, Centers for Integrated Health offers guided meditations that can get you started with relaxing more and stressing less at: <https://cih.ucsd.edu/mindfulness/guided-audio-video>

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**Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Cape May County**  
355 Court House – South Dennis Road  
4 Moore Road, DN 703 (mailing address)  
Cape May Court House, NJ 08210  
(609) 465-5115 Ext. 3609

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**<http://capemay.njaes.rutgers.edu>**

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