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Date: April 2, 2020 at 5:39:20 PM EDT

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Subject: TICN Message- Special Edition- Navigating Telework

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The COVID-19 pandemic has created disruption to all of our lives and routines, and many of us are feeling this the most when it comes to adjusting to new ways of working. Much of our workforce has transitioned to working from home full-time, often with no previous experience doing so or much time to prepare. To make this even more challenging, in many cases, the workforce is adjusting to this change at the same time as their supervisors and other agency leadership. Despite these challenges, we have a great opportunity to learn to work together in new ways, and to reveal the creativity and adaptability of our workforce as we demonstrate that we can still fulfill our mission, and can do so in ways we had probably not even imaged a month ago. There are lots of great ideas out there right now for how to approach telework, and we have compiled a sampling below.

*Thanks to the Mental Health Association of Maryland for the great list!

Telework Tips

[Tips to Make Working From Home Work For You](#)

[A Guide For Employees Who May Be Experiencing a Disruption to Employment](#)

[Tips for Managing Anxiety While Working Remotely](#)

[Understanding the Mental Health Consequences of Remote Work](#)

[Tips for Productivity, Mental Health and Staying Healthy](#)

Wait, the kids are ALSO at home?

[Tips for Working at Home with Kids](#)

[Tips for Parents Working at Home with Children During Emergencies](#)

[Advice for Adjusting to a New Life of Managing Working from Home](#)



Tips from the TICN

If you have attended the Cost of Caring Training or the Self-Care and Secondary-Traumatic-Stress Basics Workshop offered by the TICN, you know that we recommend that folks check-in on their self-care on a regular basis. Now is probably not a bad time to revisit your own self-assessment. https://mnliteracy.org/sites/default/files/self-care_assesment.pdf

Consider devoting time previously dedicated to commuting to focusing on self-care. We have a unique opportunity right now to explore online resources that are widely available for FREE. Whether you have been wanting to explore yoga, mindfulness, meditation, fitness programs or online classes, there seem to be more opportunities to do so everyday. Try a quick Google search of something you are interested in. SO MUCH FREE STUFF 😊

It is time for us to get creative! How do we continue to connect with our co-workers when we are isolated at home? In these unique circumstances, we want to make sure we are replicating the opportunities we have for connection when we are at the office while we are at home. If you typically check-in with colleagues over coffee in the morning, have team lunches or other social events to celebrate birthdays or special events how can you do that remotely? Without the incidental contact that we have all day long in the office to communicate and stay up to date on our collective work, we should consider increasing the frequency of team meetings, supervision, and other face-to-face contacts during this time. Whenever possible, take advantage of webcams!

COPING CALENDAR: KEEP CALM. STAY WISE. BE KIND

30 actions to look after ourselves and each other as we face this global crisis together. Please use & share 🙌

- 1 Make a plan to help you keep calm and stay in contact
- 2 Enjoy washing your hands. Remember all they do for you!
- 3 Write down ten things you feel grateful for in life and why
- 4 Stay hydrated, eat healthy food and boost your immune system
- 5 Get active. Even if you're stuck indoors, move & stretch
- 6 Contact a neighbour or friend and offer to help them
- 7 Share what you are feeling and be willing to ask for help
- 8 Take five minutes to sit still and breathe. Repeat regularly
- 9 Call a loved one to catch up and really listen to them
- 10 Get good sleep. No screens before bed or when waking up
- 11 Notice five things that are beautiful in the world around you
- 12 Immerse yourself in a new book, TV show or podcast
- 13 Respond positively to everyone you interact with
- 14 Play a game that you enjoyed when you were younger
- 15 Make some progress on a project that matters to you
- 16 Rediscover your favourite music that really lifts your spirits
- 17 Learn something new or do something creative
- 18 Find a fun way to do an extra 15 minutes of physical activity
- 19 Do three acts of kindness to help others, however small
- 20 Make time for self-care. Do something kind for yourself
- 21 Send a letter or message to someone you can't be with
- 22 Find positive stories in the news and share these with others
- 23 Have a tech-free day. Stop scrolling and turn off the news
- 24 Put your worries into perspective and try to let them go
- 25 Look for the good in others and notice their strengths
- 26 Take a small step towards an important goal
- 27 Thank three people you're grateful to and tell them why
- 28 Make a plan to meet up with others again later in the year
- 29 Connect with nature. Breathe and notice life continuing
- 30 Remember that all feelings and situations pass in time

“Everything can be taken from us but one thing: the freedom to choose our attitude in any given set of circumstances” ~ Viktor Frankl

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

www.actionforhappiness.org

Find out more about the Ten Keys to Happier Living, including books, guides, posters and more here: www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys

While these are certainly unique times for EVERYONE, there are some special considerations for the human services workforce. Some folks are worried about their clients disrupted access to needed supports and services, and are working to connect with them as best as they can with technology or from a distance, while others are experiencing a MAJOR uptick in business. Folks working to connect community members to financial and food resources are more stretched than ever. Feelings of not being able to do enough to help, paired with the stress of new routines and worry about our own families makes us vulnerable to impacts on our well-being. As humans, we are all vulnerable to the impact of stress on our brains and bodies. If we are not taking care of ourselves, we are going to reach the point where the internal resources we need to do our jobs will be depleted. Setting time aside to flex our own coping muscles is an essential component of all of our jobs, especially right now.

We love the quick ideas for action included in this [Coping Calendar!](#)



Being out of the office does not mean that we will avoid stressful or upsetting interactions with clients, or that the challenges of helping vulnerable county residents in these highly unusual circumstances won't take a toll on us. Without immediate in-person access to co-workers to debrief upsetting client interactions or to process other challenges, there is increased risk of these stresses building up. How can we use brain science to help?

Remember that when we are experiencing a high stress response, our body is in the flight, fight or freeze state and we are flooded with stress hormones and all the physical, emotional and cognitive responses that go with that. We might need help to de-escalate, and there are some simple strategies that we can use. Here is one idea.

Put on some shoes, and head outside (or to the best place in your house for pacing if an outdoor walk isn't an option). Bring a bottle of water!

Call a co-worker to talk the situation through while you take a brisk walk (your pace will naturally slow as your nervous system response calms).

Identifying a team member or supervisor who can be available to take these types of phone calls from staff, can prompt them to share their experience in their own words, normalize the stress response the person is having, and ask what they need in terms of additional support is one way we can set-up support structures to help everyone better navigate the isolation of remote work.

We are currently exploring a variety of options to offer additional support during this time. If you would like to request support for your team, or if you have ideas about how you or your team can support others, please let us know!

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