From the Director's Desk - "Secure your own mask first before helping others" - by Suzanne Bowers

The stress of the holidays is over but does that mean that YOUR stress is gone? If you are the parent or caregiver of a person with a disability, the answer is probably NO. We’ve all heard that it’s vital to take care of ourselves first so that we can continue to care for others, but sometimes that’s not so easy. One of my favorite articles on this topic comes from Care Dimensions in Danvers, MA, who has the following suggestions to take care of yourself:

- Laugh. Laughter, as they say, is the best medicine. It makes you forget for a while and produces endorphins, which are your body’s natural way of producing pleasure.
- Get adequate rest, food and nutrition. Keeping your body energized is an important stress-buster and provides healthful benefits as well. You’ll feel better physically, and soon that will translate into how you feel emotionally.
- Choose relaxing activities such as massage, yoga or meditation. Ten minutes of quiet moments can help clear your mind. Stretching your muscles through yoga will give you a sense of peace, and a massage can leave you intensely relaxed.
- Make time to do something that gives you pleasure. It doesn’t have to be expensive or time-consuming to produce benefits you can feel. Listening to music, gardening, shopping, walking with a friend, or seeing a movie all provide you with the same effect.
- Join a support group. Sharing with a group of peers can help you talk through your stressful times. For some, the support from others is all they need.
- Start a journal. Writing down your feelings can be very therapeutic. It’s a private venue where you can really open up.

Consider how your faith or spirituality can provide inspiration and enlightenment. If it’s important to you, going to church, even if you haven’t been in a while, may provide solace. If taking a walk on the beach gives your life meaning, then make your way to the shoreline, even if it does involve climbing a few mounds of snow to get there.

- Buy books on change, stress-relievers or self-help.
- Seek and accept help. When people offer assistance, accept it. They might offer a suggestion that worked for them that you may have overlooked.

Every little bit helps. These tips and suggestions won’t eliminate the stress but they will help reduce the negative repercussions. Some stress and anxiety is normal and it’s not a bad thing, but when it starts to get progressive, that’s when you should seek help. Time alone can motivate and clear your mind, making room for the sense of balance that so many of us desire within our demanding lifestyles. So please “secure your mask first” so that everyone in your life can continue to thrive!
Family Engagement Corner by Artina Norris - "Why Does Wellness Matter?"

Wellness is a process of becoming aware of and making choices to live a healthier life. Wellness has been on the forefront of people’s minds for some time now. Families are making lifestyle adjustments to ensure longevity of life. They are joining forces to combat obesity by changing their eating habits, adding more fruits and vegetables to their diets, while eliminating excessive sweets. As a society we want to feel better and have more energy, so adding a daily exercise routine such as weight lifting, aerobics, Zumba, walking, or swimming aids in improving and sustaining our lives. The health benefits to regular exercise and physical activity are remarkable. Regular exercise controls our weight, helps our bodies fight ailments and diseases, elevates our mood and ultimately gives us a boost of energy.

Why does wellness matter? Wellness matters because everything we do affects at least one dimension of wellness and there are seven; emotional wellness, physical wellness, environmental wellness, social wellness, intellectual wellness, spiritual wellness and occupational wellness. Maintaining a balance in each dimension is absolutely essential to living a quality life. When one of these is out of kilter, our bodies have a way of letting us know.

There is an array of resources available to aid families in engaging their children to live healthier lives. Visit http://www.letsmove.gov/ and click on the tab to the right entitled “You’re Never Too Old to Play with Your Food”. This is a great resource for children. As families creatively engage with each other, their bonds are being strengthened.

Change is often resisted, but when it improves the quality of our lives, we can more easily embrace it. As a family, implement one change to improve the quality of your life, and gradually, before you realize it wellness will become a part of your normal routine. There is nothing more powerful than a healthy fit family!!!

PEATC On Demand and In the Spotlight by Leslie Edwards - “Understanding and Managing Anger”

When someone says “health and wellness” what do you first think about? Many would say diet and exercise. While health and wellness is undoubtedly linked to diet and exercise, emotional health is a factor that is often overlooked. Just as we make efforts to take care of our bodies, it is important to take care of our minds. While parents and caregivers are navigating their way through the Special Education School System maze, they may find themselves overwhelmed with many emotions.

Maintaining partnerships with the school while maintaining your emotions in a very personal situation can be tricky. This months On Demand and In the Spotlight feature includes the presentation “Understanding and Managing Anger” by Dr. Tashna M. Felix, Owner and CEO of Professional Psychological Services in Alexandria, VA.

This presentation will shed light on some of the tools that will help remove/alleviate the obstacle of anger so it does not stand in the way of advocacy. Dr. Felix will review the meaning and understanding of anger, how to identify triggers, and discuss how to improve interpersonal relationships and overall quality of life.

To access the “Understanding and Managing Anger” presentation, please paste the following link into your internet browser: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILws98QJrZA
Early Intervention Corner by Lakeshia Yancey - "Don't Stop Playing"

Parents want to do what’s best for their children. You have to worry about them eating their veggies, drinking their milk, getting enough rest, and keeping up with immunizations. But, what about their play? Play is a very important aspect in child development. Play is the natural way in which children learn. They get to work on motor, cognitive, and social skills all while having fun. If you remember the fun of making mud pies, playing “family”, or hanging upside down from the monkey bars, then guess what; so do your kids!! We have become a very technology-driven society and children are constantly plugged in. This can result in a child becoming overweight, not developing proper gross motor skills, or learning to interact with other children. It also causes a disconnect with family members. So how can you help facilitate your child’s play?

“We don’t stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.” - George Bernard Shaw

FUN TIPS
1. Enjoy the great outdoors!!
   a. Get out and run
   b. Get dirty
   c. Explore nature
   d. Enjoy neighborhood playgrounds to meet new friends
2. Establish play groups
   a. This will help parents and children develop new friendships. Children get to interact with familiar people and feel more relaxed.
   b. Parents gain a new support system
3. Enhance play indoors
   a. Add household items to a child’s play. Simple kitchen items can easily turn play dough play into a new experience.
   b. Make a dress up box or a story box by using items as props to put on plays or make up new stories
   c. Go pretend camping in the family room
4. HAVE FUN AND PLAY WITH YOUR KIDS!!!!

Transition Corner by Sherri Coles - "Health and Wellness"

When our children are younger, it is common to have them participate in sports and athletic activities such as soccer, basketball, softball, dance, swimming or gymnastics. It can be especially nice if they are on inclusive teams. Sometimes as they get older, in high school and beyond, it is not as easy to have them participate.

It could be that they have lost interest, their friends are no longer participating, there doesn’t seem to be enough time, or any number of other reasons. Exercise is just as important to a healthy lifestyle as is nutritious food, yet it is an area of health and wellness that is sometimes not so high on our priority list as our children become young adults.

Part of our job as parents is to help our children to become as independent and healthy as possible as they grow up.

Here are some ways that other parents have helped maintain exercise in their child’s life as they grow into adults. Could any of these ideas work for your child? What other ways can you think of to keep them physically active?

* Join a team or group, such as a bowling team, health club group, neighborhood walking group, Special Olympics, dog park group, etc.
* Volunteer to help play with younger children as they engage in activities
* Join a hiking club
* If you don’t have a pet, you could volunteer to walk a neighbor’s dog, or start your own dog-walking business!
* Join a dance or theater group
* Activity groups are another good resource. If there is not one in your area, you could talk to some other parents about starting one.
* Find ways to get some exercise that your family enjoys doing together
* Does your county recreation department have a pool that you and your family could go to each week? Check out what kinds of programs the recreation department offers. You might be pleasantly surprised!
* When your young adult is in high school, could they participate with the pep squad, or be on a sports team? Some families have had their child become the manager for one of the school sports or dance teams, and this gets them moving around!
* Maybe you and your child could join an exercise class together

There are so many ways to become more active, and so many good health and mental health reasons to do it. What will you and your family do to help your child (and you!) stay more active? Why not send your ideas to us so we can share them?
Deportes y Recreación

Existen varias opciones de recreación para niños y jóvenes. Es bueno prepararse temprano para las actividades que acompañan la primavera y verano. Las actividades recreativas son una oportunidad para los niños de hacer amigos, hacer ejercicio, hacer algo que les encanta, practicar destrezas que necesitan desarrollar u explorar actividades que les pueden llegar a encantar. Algunas ideas incluyen:

- **Actividades terapéuticas del condado.** Muchos condados tienen divisiones que organizan actividades de recreación para niños con necesidades especiales. Los condados también a veces ofrecen costos reducidos para familias de bajos recursos. Vaya al sitio web de su condado y busque “recreación terapéutica para niños.” También puede contactarse con servicios sociales en su condado para encontrar este recurso.

- **Campamentos de verano.** Cada año hay muchos campamentos que se realizan en Virginia y en todo Estados Unidos. De hecho, PEATC publica una lista larga y detallada de campamentos en Virginia cada año. Los niños pueden asistir a campamentos cerca o lejos de casa. Algunas organizaciones proveen reembolsos del costo del campamento de verano.

- **Olimpiadas Especiales de Virginia.** Entrena a atletas con necesidades especiales y les anima a participar en competencias. Sus actividades se realizan todo el año y tienen oficinas regionales. [http://specialolympicsva.org/spanish](http://specialolympicsva.org/spanish) | [http://specialolympicsva.org/who-we-are/find-special-olympics-near-you](http://specialolympicsva.org/who-we-are/find-special-olympics-near-you)

- **Parques nacionales para una simple caminata o exploración en sitios históricos o naturales.** Los parques nacionales proveen un pase especial gratuito de por vida para personas con necesidades especiales. El pase les da acceso a más de 2,000 sitios recreativos nacionales incluyendo descuentos. [http://store.usgs.gov/pass/access.html](http://store.usgs.gov/pass/access.html)

- **Organizaciones sin fines de lucro que organizan actividades sin o de bajo costo como KEEN of Greater DC, Dreams for Kids DC, Surfers Healing entre otros.**

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**Sports and Recreation**

There are many recreational options for children and youth. It is good to prepare early for the activities that come with Spring and Summer. Recreational activities are a good chance for children to make friends, to exercise, to do something they love, to practice skills they need to develop, or to explore activities they may get to love. Some ideas include:

- **County’s therapeutic activities.** Many counties have departments that provide recreational activities for children with special needs. Some counties sometimes offer reduced costs for low-income families. Go to your county’s website and search “therapeutic recreation for children.” You can also contact social services in your county to find this resource.

- **Summer Camps.** Each year there are many summer camps throughout Virginia and the U.S. In fact, PEATC publishes a long and detailed list of summer camps in Virginia each year. Children can go to summer camps close or far from home. Some organizations provide reimbursements for the cost of summer camp.

- **Special Olympics Virginia.** Trains athletes with special needs and encourages them to participate in competitions. They have activities throughout the year and have regional offices. [http://specialolympicsva.org/who-we-are/find-special-olympics-near-you](http://specialolympicsva.org/who-we-are/find-special-olympics-near-you)

- **National Parks.** You can take a walk and explore historical and natural sites. National parks have a free lifetime pass for people with special needs. It gives them access to more than 2,000 sites including discounts.

- **Non-profit organizations that organize low to no cost activities like KEEN of Greater DC, Dreams for Kids DC, Surfers Healing among others.**

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**PEATC Trainings and Events - January 2015**

**Tuesday, January 13, 2015** - Webinar: ADHD, Exercise, and Sports: Their Impact on Each Other, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm. Register at [https://cc.readytalk.com/cc/s/registrations/new?cid=5ozttj1usplk](https://cc.readytalk.com/cc/s/registrations/new?cid=5ozttj1usplk). For more information, please contact PEATC at 703-923-0010 or partners@peatc.org.

**Thursday, January 22, 2015** - "Understanding Special Education" workshop **IN SPANISH**, 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm, at The Arc of Greater Prince William, 13505 Hillendale Drive, Woodbridge, VA 22193. Please RSVPs to Daniela Ancalle at 703-923-0010 or ancalle@peatc.org.