



A Specialized Services Newsletter

Inside the Issue

SELF-CARE EDITION

Winter break is here, you made it! We know the journey to get here didn't come without tears and sleepless nights- please take a moment to pause, breathe, and reflect on what an amazing job you have done in these unprecedented times. We want to encourage you to take these next two weeks to take care of YOU. Your health and mental well-being matter and can be a great example to our students and families.

WHAT IS SELF-CARE?



Self-care can be defined as "any activity that we do deliberately (an ACTIVE choice) in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health" (Dr. Erin Ramirez and Matthew Oldenburg). Allowing space for self-care and making the choice to make it a priority is key for uplifting moods and reducing anxiety. Self-care can look different for everyone and identifying what that looks like for you can be tough, especially when taking care of others may typically take priority. Self-care is not something we *force* ourselves to do or something that we do *not* enjoy doing. Self-care does not consist of scrolling through social media until you become anxious or basic/regular hygiene such as taking a shower.

Self-care is a practice to protect our own health and taking time to care for ourselves. It can be anything that we deliberately do (or don't do) by keeping our well-being in mind.



WHY SELF-CARE?

It can be easy to forget about ourselves when we are so worried about our students and families during this time. While that is truly the heart and soul behind why we do what we do, it is also important to make sure that you are taking time out for yourself. Here is how taking time for self-care can improve your well-being:

Brain: improve memory, reduce negative thinking, increase frustration tolerance, and decrease feelings of anxiety and depression.

Physically: increased ability to cope with fatigue, improved energy, and experience less somatic symptoms (stomach aches, headaches, and back pain).

Behaviorally: reduce interpersonal conflicts, balanced sleeping, and healthier eating.

SELF CARE THROUGH BAKING



We have been inspired by the ways that some of you take time to re-fuel or manage some of the many stressors that this pandemic can bring. Dr. Erin Ramirez, School Psychologist at Lone Hill Middle School, has transformed her kitchen into a sweet treat haven with baked goods being pulled out of the oven daily. If baking some delicious treats can bring your heart some joy during this break, check out some of her tried and true favorite recipes by clicking the links below:



[Eggnog Cinnamon Rolls](#)

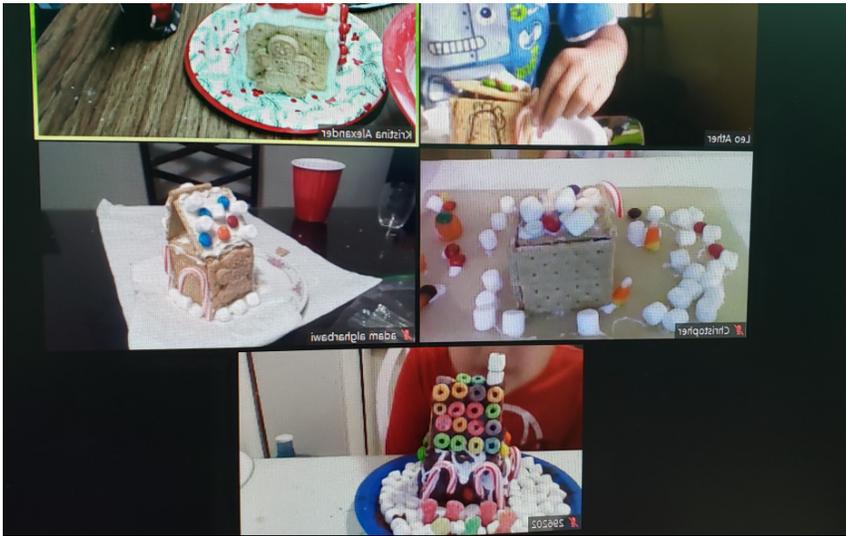
[Pumpkin Snickerdoodles](#)

[Candy Cane Brownie Trifle](#)

[Fool Proof Chocolate Fudge](#)



GINGERBREAD HOUSE CONSTRUCTION



Krissy Alexander, ASD PreK/K teacher at Gladstone Elementary School, builds gingerbread houses with her students using graham crackers and other sweet treats. Thank you for creating fun memories through the distance, Krissy!

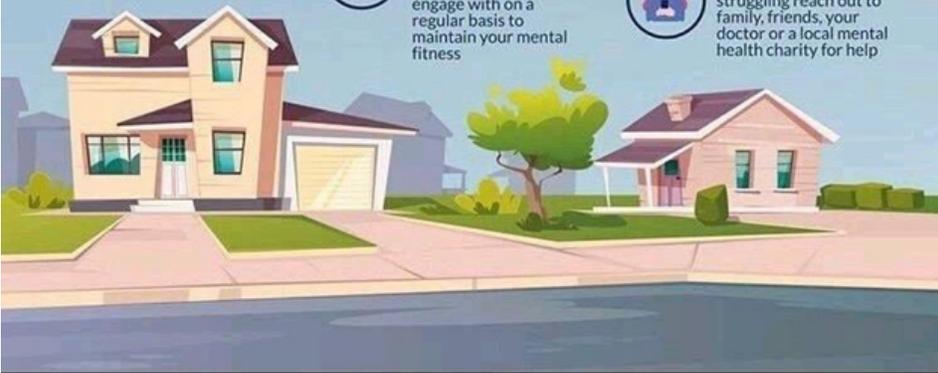
Happy Holidays



A MENTAL HEALTH GUIDE TO COPING WITH LOCKDOWN IN THE WINTER

@BELIEVEPHQ

- LIGHTING**
On dark mornings wake up gradually with increasing light. Try out a SAD light or lumie bodyclock
- LIMIT NEWS**
Limit the amount of time you spend on social media and checking news
- TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF**
Plan time into your week where you can engage in activities that are relaxing. It is important to have time for yourself where you engage in some self care
- STAY CONNECTED**
Even though it might be difficult to see friends and family it is important that you stay connected to them on a regular basis
- COPING STRATEGIES**
Identify some positive strategies you can engage in that help you to deal with stress, worry or anxiety
- PLAN YOUR WEEK**
Organise your week and plan in activities that provide you with a sense of pleasure and achievement
- POSITIVE HABITS**
Write down a list of 5 - 10 positive mental health habits you can engage with on a regular basis to maintain your mental fitness
- HELP OTHERS**
Whether it is helping around the house or supporting your brother or sister, helping others can help provide you with positive emotions
- CONNECT TO YOUR VALUES**
Re connect with things that are important to you and try to engage with them on a regular basis
- STAY ACTIVE**
Throughout the day try and be active. Take a break from your work and walk around. Regular exercise can also be great for reducing stress and boosting mood
- ASK FOR HELP**
If you notice yourself struggling reach out to family, friends, your doctor or a local mental health charity for help



From our Families to Yours

Bonta Unified Specialized Services Department

2020 DIRECTOR'S CORNER

We know you've worked extraordinarily hard this past year. You've spent countless hours relearning nearly every aspect of your job. You've helped support our families and students and given your all. I know you are exhausted.

It's easy to look back at 2020 and see the messy, but the messy and tough has required us to grow. Please take a moment to take pride in that growth. That growth has been hard earned.

Most importantly, this holiday season give yourself the kindness, patience and thoughtfulness you've given others. Take time to care for yourself.

Wishing you love, peace and health this holiday season,

Danielle

