

April 6, 2020

Dear Placentia Library District Patrons,

You're probably wondering when this disruptor of our current lives, COVID-19 will end? Truthfully, no one knows. One thing for certain is it will be awhile before we return to "normalcy." None of us were prepared for such a disruption. Not knowing, and the social disconnect, can cause emotional and psychological stress.

As our staff adapts to telecommuting and the absence of physical interaction with our patrons and their colleagues, we are reminded of the fragile human mental state. Even the strong can experience anxiety. **April is National Stress Awareness month** so today, we would like to share some stress relieving steps you can take during these complicated and nerve-racking times. While we cannot control COVID-19, we have the power to control how we respond to our internal and psychological needs. The National Center for PTSD recommends:

- Staying connected.
Seek support from family, friends, mentors, and clergy whether it be via a phone call, email, texts or video calls.
- Cultivating ways to be more calm.
What does this look like? It means we must realize it is understandable to feel anxious and worried about what may happen. It also means we must reduce our news consumption to lessen how much attention we are paying to the problem (advice also recommended by the American Psychological Association). Rather, we should channel this time by practicing positive calming activities such as yoga, breathing exercises, and listening to calming music. Sheila Teresa Murphy, an associate professor of communication at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, suggests avoiding binge-watch TV news -- instead watching a happy movie, reading a book (overdrive, hoopla) or doing something you truly enjoy. You will feel better.
- Improve your sense of control and ability to endure.
Accept that current circumstances cannot be changed and focus on what we can alter. Set achievable goals within this COVID-19 period in our lives. Shift negative statements to ones that allow you to function with less distress -- instead of "this is a terrible time," use "this is a terrible time, but I can get through this." Focus on what you can accomplish or control rather than feeling discouraged. Changing out of your PJ is a big accomplishment nowadays and for that you get a gold star for the day. Remember you are 'safe at home', not just 'staying at home.'
- Remain hopeful.
Maintaining a long-term perspective helps us to stay positive. Look for opportunities to practice being more patient or kind with yourself. Draw upon your spirituality, those who inspire you, or your personal beliefs and values. Many congregations have virtual religious services and daily messages from spiritual leaders which can brighten your daily outlook.

In recognition of our healthcare workers and in celebration of **World Health Worker Week (April 5-11, 2020)**, we thank them for their dedication and commitment. We can only imagine the immense pressure these workers are experiencing given the demands, risk of infection and equipment shortages they're faced with every day. Many of our patrons have expressed their appreciation by offering health workers masks and delivering food. Another way to say "thank you" is to support the U.S. House Resolution 467, recognizing frontline health workers impact in saving lives and battling global health threats. Please call or write to your House Representative to support HR 467. You can also honor these workers using the #WHWWeek hashtag. These workers are true heroes.

In closing, it is normal to feel stress, anxiety, and worry during such difficult times. Recognize everyone reacts differently to stress, and that your feelings will change over time. Notice and accept how you feel. If you have a tough day, remember the recommendations above and take breaks to unwind yourself.

Take care of yourself.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Contreras
Library Director