

COVID-19 Information Collaboration

Building Strength, Courage, and Resilience, through the Pandemic

Local Support Line: (817)-579-4483 | Email: TRT@pecanvalley.org | Texas COVID-19 24/7 Support Line: (833)-986-1919



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● September is Suicide Prevention Month! ● How can YOU help prevent suicide? ● *Written by Latisha Melton, MSW*

● Talking about suicide can be a difficult subject to discuss. However, if we can provide a few strategies to help target possible suicidal behaviors and provide individuals with the steps on what to do if they notice these behaviors, you could possibly save a life. Some things to look for when someone may be thinking about suicide are, talking about wanting to die, acting anxious, giving their things away, withdrawing from family and friends, or suddenly saying goodbye to loved ones. These are all signs that someone may be thinking about suicide. What can you do to help? This part may be a bit difficult, but you will directly ask, “Are you thinking of killing yourself?” or “Are you having thoughts of suicide?” You will want to listen to the person without judgment, take the situation and their words seriously, offer hope, and get help. If the situation is an emergency always call 9-1-1 or go to your local emergency room (Texas Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). You can also call your local Pecan Valley Crisis line at 1-800-772-5987 for an assessment and assistance. Lastly, the suicide hotline number is 1-(800)-273-TALK (8255).

The Impact of COVID-19 on our Communities

Written by Madalyn Cano, MSSW, LMSW, Program Manager

What a breath of fresh air it is to be able to offer needed resources and support to our communities without screening for “eligibility criteria” or ability to pay for services. The Texans Recovering Together program across the State of Texas has already reached over 1.5 million citizens, thanks to the great outreach work of staff in the Crisis Counseling Programs. The Pecan Valley CCP program has already provided 200 individual counseling sessions since June 1st. 30 Group public education sessions have been conducted. The Counselors have provided resource referrals to 310 respondents. 47 were in need of Mental Health services; 65 requested help with substance use issues; 60 were in need of general community services such as food, clothing, housing, employment or financial services; 18 were in need of resources for individuals with a

disability. Please continue to share information about Texans Recovering Together Crisis Counseling Services. This team is making a difference in our communities.



**TEXANS
RECOVERING
TOGETHER**
CRISIS COUNSELING ASSISTANCE
AND TRAINING PROGRAM

Clinical Corner: Talking to Your Kids About COVID-19

Written by Cindi Lopez, LPC



You may feel stressed and anxious about COVID-19 and so may your kids. During a rapidly changing situation, loss of daily routine, isolation

and uncertainty can lead to fear, anxiety, depression and loneliness. When you feel this way, your kids may feel it too. Try these strategies to talk with them and help them cope:

- Remain Calm
- Keep a routine
- Limit access to news

- Be creative about ways to have fun
- Enjoy virtual socializing
- Avoid placing blame
- Seek professional help if you notice persistent problems with sleep, changes in eating habits, or they are having persistent problems with their mental health.

As a parent, caring for yourself during this time is important. Pay attention to your feelings, get enough sleep, eat a healthy diet, and get plenty of exercise. This will enable you to care for your kids and serve as a role model for how to cope (Mayo Clinic, 2020).

Clinical Corner: Sleep Smarter

Written by Andrea Carmack, M.Ed.

Here's an easy way to:

- Lose up to 55 percent body fat
- Build and repair muscle
- Secrete Human Growth Hormone (HGH) for a younger appearance
- Increase thyroid hormones (body's metabolic center)
- Increase Brown Adipose Tissue (BAT) that increases metabolism
- Secrete Leptin hormone that regulates energy by inhibiting hunger, which in turn diminishes fat storage
- Naturally repair all body systems at a cellular level to build our immune system and promote health
- Clarity of thinking

All this and more is possible with around 7-8.5 hours of “sleeping smarter”! Stevenson (2016) states in his book Sleep Smarter sites several studies that have been done regarding sleep; the University of Chicago did a study concluding that we can lose up to 55% body fat with around 8 and a half hours of *solid sleep (*solid sleep is enhanced by holding off on any blue lights—phone, computer, or TV an hour before bed time [unless ‘night shift’ is installed on your phone, or download a free app ‘f.lux’ on your laptop that pulls blue light]---avoid sugar or alcohol two hours before bedtime, and avoid caffeine after 1:00 PM.

During solid sleep BAT is released in our system-- BAT operates a lot like muscle— it burns fat during the sleep cycle where melatonin is released in the body. Melatonin assists in deep sleep that allows our brain to repair any diseased cells, tissues, and organs. Another benefit of solid sleep is the production of serotonin, which is a precursor to melatonin; 400 times more melatonin is produced in the gut than the brain; sleeping smarter starts in your gut! Avoid fried and processed foods, chlorinated tap water, and make sure to eat foods rich in magnesium (avocados, nuts, legumes, seeds, fish, whole grains, okra, baked potatoes...) and plenty of vitamin C— deficiency of magnesium and vitamin C causes interruption of the sleep cycle.

Sleeping smarter helps one to lose body fat, increase mental clarity/focus, build muscle, increase metabolism, builds up our immune system, plus so much more... all to help regulate stress and promote overall well-being!



Recovery Relief: Overcoming Addiction During COVID-19

Written by Jamie Pytlik, BSW

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted nearly everyone on some level, and as a result, many individuals are suffering from mental health concerns. One group that is more vulnerable to these mental health concerns are individuals who are struggling with substance abuse disorders. According to a recent study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 26% of individuals surveyed reported an increased use of substances to cope with stressors related to COVID-19, and approximately 10% seriously considered suicide (Cziesler et al, 2020). Many individuals experiencing substance use disorders are unable to

receive the treatments and supports they need due to stay-at-home orders. If you or a loved one is struggling with substance abuse, the Texans Recovering Together Crisis Counseling Program can help. Trained crisis counselors can provide support to individuals who need assistance in staying sober and connect individuals with resources in the community that can provide support and treatment. Some of these resources include: Alcoholics Anonymous, Celebrate Recovery, Addiction Recovery Ministries in Mineral Wells, Texas, services through Pecan Valley Centers, and other resources in each of the counties we serve.

Community Resources

Written by Gracie Chafer, BSW & Hailey Durham, BSW

As crisis counselors, we are trained on how to aide people through a disaster. Clients in an emergency usually enter a state of distress, which can include multiple different reactions, and often pull away in an effort to deal with the crisis at hand. They may be instantly unable to plan for their basic needs, such as medical, food, and shelter needs. We as crisis counselors may provide brief and solution-focused advocacy to help clients meet their needs. This may entail translating clients' wants to service providers or helping clients apply for social services. Resource Referrals would include immediate need referrals to community resources for food, clothing, financial assistance, medical and mental health support as well as connecting individuals to support networks, including family members, friends, neighbors, and community helping resources (Substance Abuse and

Mental Health Services Administration, 2013). In each newsletter, we will also highlight different resources in the community. This month, we will highlight 211. Texas 211 is a state program that offers a multitude of resources to families in need. You can call 211 or search Texas 211 online, identify what need you are looking to meet, and 211 will provide potential resources to meet this need.



Teacher to Teacher: Welcome Back to School!

Written by Jennifer Sims, BS, Education

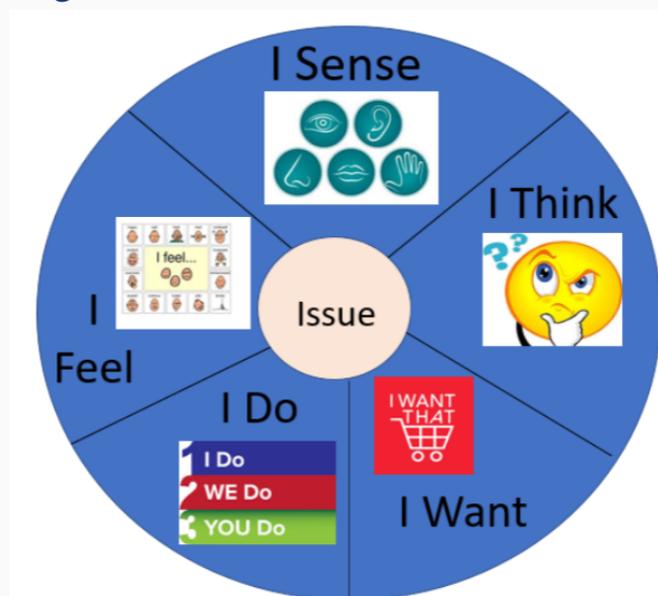
**STRAIGHT
OUTTA
QUARANTINE
TEACHER 2020**

Pencils sharpened, desks grouped and labeled with names, bulletin boards freshly papered, lesson plans ready and turned in to admin. You just finished your annual bloodborne pathogen video and you're ready to begin. But wait, that was just a dream. This year is not the same. This year. 2020. Who can say how it will go? No one. During this time, you have to look around and find what is the same. You. You got into this to help kids grow and become who they are going to be. You are trained and you are ready. Embrace the glitches as they come. When things go south and they will, show the kids how to handle it in a healthy way. They need to see the mistakes and they need to see you triumph. They will be your biggest cheering section. Be open with the parents and let them know you are learning too and that together, as a team, you will get through this unsettling time and they will too. Don't forget a thing so you can tell the tale one day. Encourage your team with a positive and uplifting attitude even if you are not feeling it yourself. Their smile will become your smile. If you need to borrow a smile or need to bend an ear, we are here for you at Texans Recovering Together. Allow us to support you and the families you serve as you navigate this fall semester.

Special Needs & Populations: The Issue/Feelings Wheel

Written by *Shelley Scheuren, BS, Special Education*

Students with disabilities may find identifying their feelings and why they are feeling them extremely difficult. During stressful situations, managing reactions and then using coping skills to get them through can be difficult for all children, but especially so for students with disabilities. Teachers and parents can help students with learning differences or special needs by acknowledging and discussing the students fears and feelings. Build rapport with the students and find their strengths then use the students' strengths to build meaningful activities that help children identify their feelings and issues. One strategy would be using an issues or feelings wheel. The example shown can be changed according to the child's age or coping ability. Examples: Discuss and name the emotion on each section of the wheel. Use the wheel as a check in point each day.



Creating Safe Homes: Domestic Violence and COVID-19

Written by *Jamie Pytlik, BSW & Erin Stroebel, BS, Criminal Justice*



Since the onset of COVID-19 back in March, we as a society have focused heavily on the idea that everyone is “safer at home.” However, for the thousands of

individuals experiencing domestic violence, home is not safer. COVID-19 has forced many individuals to quarantine with family members who are jeopardizing their safety. Historical data indicates rates of domestic violence increase during pandemics, economic crises, and when families spend more time together, such as during the holidays (Valera, 2020). Since the start of the pandemic, many domestic violence hotlines and law enforcement agencies have reported an increase in calls,

and stay-at-home orders limited access to resources for individuals to escape to safety. Additionally, the risk of suicide among victims of intimate partner violence magnifies the issue at hand, as victims of domestic violence are twice as likely to attempt suicide than other individuals (Clay, 2014). The Texans Recovering Together Crisis Counseling Program is here to support any individual who is experiencing intimate partner violence. Trained Crisis Counselors can provide emotional support to survivors, and assist with developing a unique safety plan and locating resources such as shelter and legal aid. You can also call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.

Senior Support: Combating Loneliness

Written by *Latisha Melton, MSW & Natalie Gore, BSW*

Loneliness puts seniors at high risk for developing depressive symptoms. Here are some great ways for our senior population to engage virtually and how the community can connect with their senior population. One in five adults state that loneliness was already a concern prior to the pandemic and 58% stated that this affects their mental health. Finding a way for seniors to connect virtually on platforms is a great way to keep them connected during the pandemic. Also, connecting the old fashion way via phone is a great way to keep engaged. Communities should often check on their high-risk, geriatric neighbors and find ways to keep them engaged within their neighborhood. Sending them care packages filled with baked goods, crosswords, puzzles, and movies can be a great way to



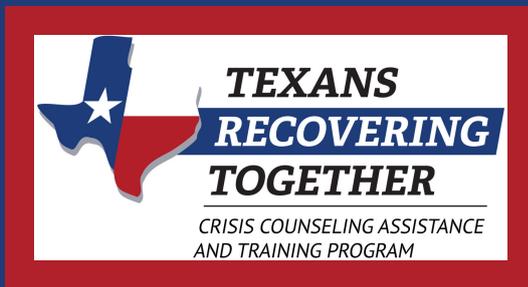
send support while keeping social distance and managing health safety. (National Institute on Health Care Management, 2020). Keep looking for monthly up to date information in our senior support section of our newsletter.

Success Story

During my training for this program I was skeptical due to the scope of COVID-19 that we would be successful in making a huge impact in our small community. How could we possibly make a difference when so many individuals lives have been uprooted and changed due to COVID-19. Since we started seeing clients in this program around June, I have been able to successfully help many individuals. One client has stood out to me because I have seen such an amazing transformation in the past few months. This individual was jobless and on the verge of losing everything, but with resources,

support, and a listening ear this individual is back on their feet. They have a new career, their bills are caught up, and they are so grateful for the Texans Recovering Together Crisis Counseling Program. I have learned such an important lesson on how our program is designed to work by helping one person at a time. If you or anyone you know is suffering due to effects from COVID-19, we are here for you. Through our free and confidential services, we can help you or your loved ones become the next success story. Until next time, have a blessed day.

Texans Recovering Together Crisis Counseling Program is here to support you through COVID-19!



FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL

- Crisis Counseling
- Resource Referrals
- Skill Building
- Grief and Loss
- Disaster Education and Awareness

Local Support Line: (817)-579-4483 | Email: TRT@pecanvalley.org

Texas COVID-19 24/7 Support Line: (833)-986-1919 | Pecan Valley 24-Hour Crisis Hotline: (800)-772-5987

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Special Needs and Populations: The Issue/Feelings Wheel

Image: The Issue/Feelings Wheel. (2020). [Image]. Image created by Shelley Scheuren

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