



The five pillars of self-care

You may or may not be aware that we are members of the NFDIA. They have published some guidance on practising self-care which Jeremy thought you might all find useful for – I quote the NAFD piece – ‘when everything else goes to hell in a handbasket’!

1. Get rest when possible

I understand that for funeral directors, who must sometimes be available 24/7, getting good rest and sleep is challenging enough in the best of times. During this crisis, it may seem completely out of reach. Yet when stress goes up, your body's and mind's need for restorative rest goes up as well. As much as you can and whenever possible, please make rest a priority. If you don't, your mental and physical health will worsen, and your immune system will falter, putting you at even greater risk of disease. Now may seem like a time when sleep sacrifices have to be made, and that may be true. But also remember that now more than ever, you need as much rest and sleep as you can get.

2. Eat decent food, and drink enough water

I know that it can be hard to eat well when we're busy and stressed, but I encourage you to cling to a few eating-plan rules that you know you'll be able to adhere to. For example, you might commit to eating at least two servings of fresh fruit and vegetables each day. No matter what else you eat, this alone will help ensure that you get enough fibre and vitamins to protect your health. And don't forget

to drink enough water to stay well-hydrated. Dehydration can cause all kinds of unpleasant side effects, including fatigue and headaches.

3. Connect with loved ones

No matter how busy you are right now, you need and deserve quality time with loved ones. So make those video or phone calls to friends and family, send those texts, and use any downtime you might have to relax alongside the people with whom you're sheltering in place. Mutual love and support will see you through.

4. Express yourself

The more stressful your work life gets, the more critical it is to talk aloud about all the stresses. Sharing your internal thoughts and feelings outside yourself will help you navigate these traumatic times. Keeping everything inside, on the other hand, will likely pull you under. So open up regularly to the good listeners in your life, including other funeral directors or the free counselling helplines. When something particularly challenging happens, find time to debrief about it as soon afterward as you can. Later on, after the crisis has abated somewhat, you and your team may also need additional time to talk and to process, so ensure you make this a priority.

5. Turn to gratitude and grace

Especially on days when you're feeling the most overwhelmed and in despair, turn to gratitude and grace. Remember everything you have to be grateful for. Intentionally place your awareness on the good people and happenings around you. Notice all the kindnesses and support. Have compassion for any mistakes or failings. Whenever you stop to take a moment to breathe, re-centre yourself, and focus on gratitude, you invoke a self-fulfilling prophecy. That which you are grateful for multiplies. Months from now, you will be able to look back at this period as a time of hardship, yes, but also an unparalleled season of empathy, heroism, and grace.

In addition to these five basic pillars, which are essential each and every day without fail, I encourage you to **make room in your daily schedule whenever possible for something that gives you pleasure**. Give yourself permission to spend at least a few minutes on something that brings you enjoyment and helps you decompress and relax.



No regrets

I stumbled across this in a book I'm currently reading and thought I'd share it as we all take this time to reflect on how we live our lives. A palliative nurse wrote an article called 'Top five regrets of the dying' from her time spent caring for people with life-limiting conditions. They were:

'I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.'

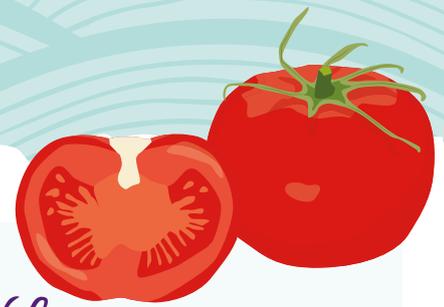
'I wish I didn't work so hard.'

'I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.'

'I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.'

'I wish that I had let myself be happier.'

Food for thought...



Quarantini time!

The Old Fashioned

This week from our President Colin Field. It's his current lockdown favourite, The Old Fashioned: a traditional whisky cocktail with soda water and orange.

Ingredients:

2sp sugar syrup or 1 tsp granulated sugar
1-2 dashes angostura bitters
Splash of water
60ml Scotch whisky
Soda water – optional
Orange slice
Maraschino cherry to garnish – optional

Method:

Put the sugar, bitters and water in a small tumbler. Mix until the sugar dissolves if using granulated. Fill your glass with ice and stir in the whisky. Add a splash of soda water if you like, and mix. Garnish with the orange and cherry. Colin's top tip – don't be too shy with the whisky! Not the for faint hearted.

Nutrition advice

with Elaine Wiseman

As the weather is (hopefully) continuing to warm up a bit, we will be spending more time in the sun. Did you know some foods offer protection to prevent sunburn? Obviously we need to use sunscreen, but the following foods can help protect our skin from further damage.

Tomatoes contains lycopene (a carotenoid which gives the colour of some fruit and vegetables) may protect against UV rays. It is known that the lycopene content is higher in cooked tomatoes or concentrated forms such as tomato purée or juice rather than in raw tomatoes, so a tomato pasta sauce will be a good idea to increase levels.

Beta-carotene foods such as carrots, mangoes, orange/yellow/red peppers, red cabbage, papaya, strawberries and watermelon are all another rich source of lycopene, as well as being high in vitamin C which provides anti-ageing properties.

Try this delicious summer salsa recipe:

Chop up one ripe mango, deseed and chop finely half a red chilli (keep seeds if you like heat). Squeeze the juice of one lime and chop finely a small bunch of fresh coriander, keeping the stalks as they add more flavour and goodness. Mix together to make a fresh, fragrant salsa. I usually have this with my homemade chilli and put in wraps with guacamole and sour cream. The salsa is good to have with anything spicy – entirely up to you!

Mindfulness through creative activity

by Andy Holter

A creative activity is an opportunity to use our imagination: exploring ideas we otherwise might not think, making time to relax, and encouraging that feel-good feeling through play, fun and achievement. This all develops a positive sense of wellbeing.

In this time of lockdown we may find ourselves facing the same four walls, the same smells and the same daily routines for days on end. Instead of accepting this, embrace it as an opportunity to explore

new ways of being creative – whether individually or as a family – by doing something fun to do during these challenging times.

To train our brain and create an imaginary world far from our own through creative drawing, painting, model building or even using the legendary Lego sets, allows us to find our inner child and return to fun and play, encouraging our sense of achievement, whether individually or as a family.

So let's clear the dining room table. Put on some relaxing music, stop the daily hectic schedule of sitting at the computer, writing emails, making business phone calls and watching endless hours of television or playing on game consoles, and instead make room for that much needed 'you time', or in the case of families, 'family time'.

Mindfulness through creative activities improves our attention span, working our

memory and reaction speed. It enhances our mental stamina and resilience, whilst improving our brain function. It increases grey matter in areas associated with self-awareness, empathy, self-control and attention. It soothes the parts of the brain that produce stress hormones, and builds those areas that lift mood and promote learning. It even reduces some of the thinning of certain areas of the brain that naturally occurs with age, which must be a good thing!

Mindfulness through creativity is a great antidote to anxiety, stress, depression, exhaustion and irritability, so go find yourself a creative idea and have some much-needed fun in your daily routine.

For more on this week's 'Mindfulness through creativity' go to SharePoint Academy / Wellbeing Folder and find Andy's recording on developing creativity.



Coronacoaster (noun): The feeling experienced during a pandemic. One minute you're baking banana bread and dancing to the radio in the kitchen; the next you're crying because you've run out of chocolate so you pour yourself another pint of gin!