



WATAUGA COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

# RESPONDING TO COMMUNITY STRESS

VISIT [WATAUGACCI.ORG](http://WATAUGACCI.ORG) FOR MORE RESOURCES  
AND INFORMATION

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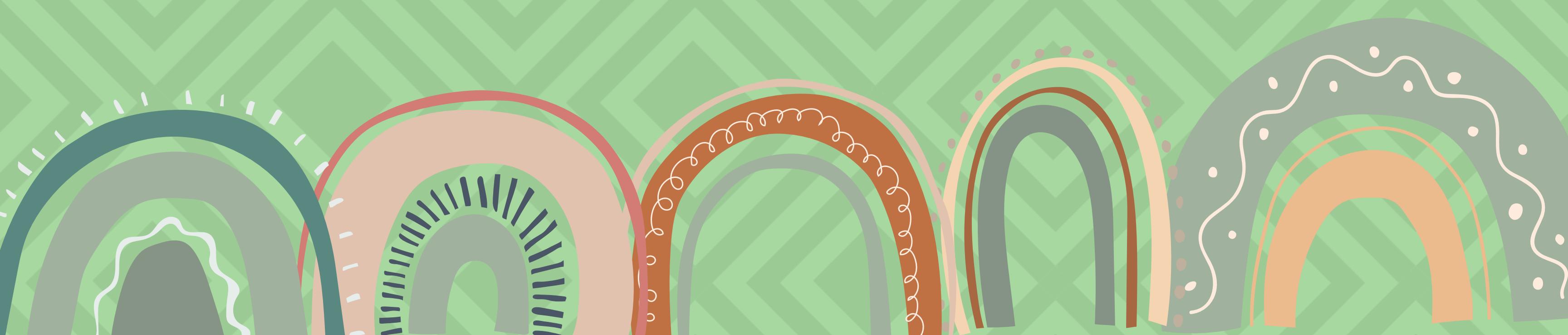
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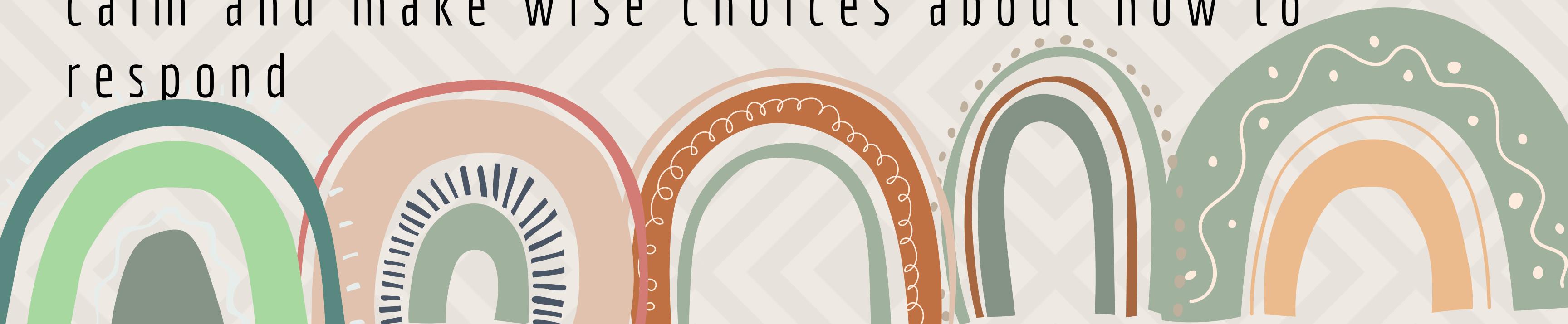
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# Resiliency v Self Care

**Resilience or resiliency:** At its core, this is about affecting our nervous system in positive ways. The reasons ACES and other chronic or repetitive stressful events or situations create the cascades of physical, emotional, and cognitive health problems we talk about are all because of the dramatic changes in every system in the body that happen when we go into a stress reaction (fight-flight or freeze reaction). It yanks our body out of normal day-to-day balanced functioning into an emergency gear that's perfect for helping us survive a physical threat or attack, but becomes toxic when it happens often or all the time.

True resilience is about literally changing how our brains work. -- shifting out of that fight-flight or freeze response into a calmer state where the body can begin to function more normally again, -- reducing our reactivity to future stressors that are not truly dangerous, so when disturbing events or situations happen, we are more able to stay calm and make wise choices about how to respond



# PRETZEL BREATHING

WCCI March Resiliency Skill

This is a strategy for calming and containing excess energy and can be particularly useful for reducing anxiety in the moment, for calming overwhelming feelings, and for re-establishing a sense of peace after nightmares.

To practice it, sit and extend your arms. Allow the backs of your palms to touch each other with your pinkies to the sky and thumbs pointed at the ground. Then, put one hand over the other so that the palms are now touching (with the pinkies still pointed to the sky and thumbs to the ground). Interlace the fingers and then pull your interlaced hands into your chest, allowing your hands to rest on your heart. Then, cross your ankles (preferably with the same ankle and same hand is on top)

Sit and breathe. With each inhale, allow your tongue to press to the roof of your mouth. On the exhale, allow the tongue to drop to the bottom of your mouth. Sit and breathe for one to two minutes.... or as long as you need!

**\*\*If you have injuries or the posture causes pain/ discomfort, allow yourself to just sit and do the breath work instead.**

For more information see Conscious Discipline ([www.conscious discipline.com](http://www.conscious discipline.com)) or the Journal of EMDR Practice & Research Volume 1, Number 2, 2007, page 122



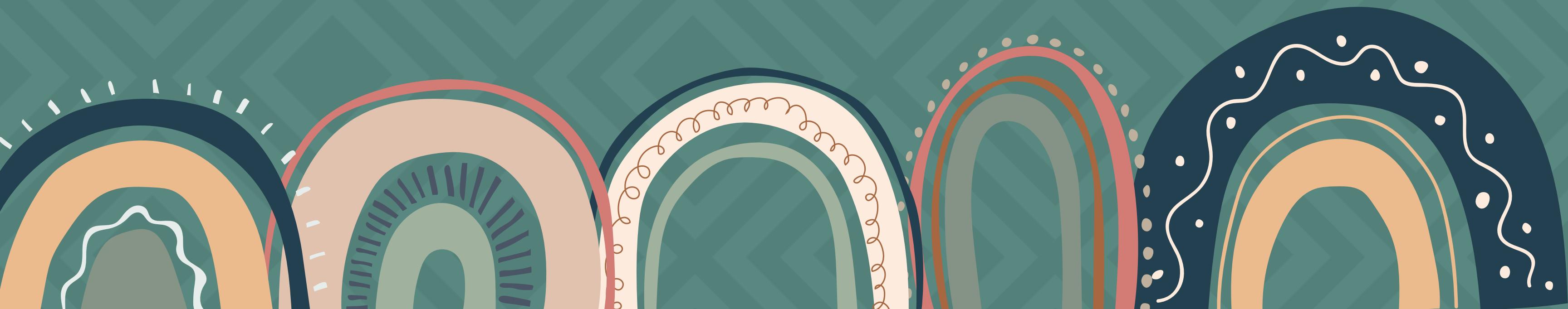
# CHAIR PULLS & WALL PUSHES

WCCI April Resiliency Skill

TO RESET YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM IN 30 SECONDS:  
FIND A WAY TO POSITION SO YOU ARE ABLE TO TENSE AND HOLD  
YOUR LARGE MUSCLES ISOMETRICALLY FOR 30 SECONDS. SOME  
SUGGESTIONS ARE:

- PUSH YOUR BACK AGAINST A WALL, FACE A WALL AND PUSH  
AGAINST THE WALL WITH YOUR HANDS, BRACING YOUR LEGS
- SIT ON A CHAIR AND GRIP THE BOTTOM OF IT WITH YOUR HANDS.

SET A STOPWATCH FOR 33 SECONDS (THE ADDITIONAL 3 SEC GIVES  
YOU TIME TO ASSUME YOUR POSITION), POSITION YOUR BODY AND  
EXERT AS MUCH ENERGY INTO YOUR LARGE MUSCLES AS YOU CAN  
AND HOLD IT FOR 30 SECONDS. YOU MAY FIND YOURSELF WANTING  
TO RELEASE BEFORE THEN, BUT HANG INT THERE FOR THE FULL 30  
TO GIVE YOUR BODY ENOUGH TIME TO RESET. TRY TO TIGHTEN AND  
SUSTAIN AS MANY OF YOUR LARGE MUSCLES AS YOU CAN, YOUR  
LIMBS, ABS, GLUTS, ETC. WHEN THE TIMER GOES OFF, ALLOW YOUR  
SELF SOME TIME TO SIMPLY ENJOY RELAXING. AHHHH...!

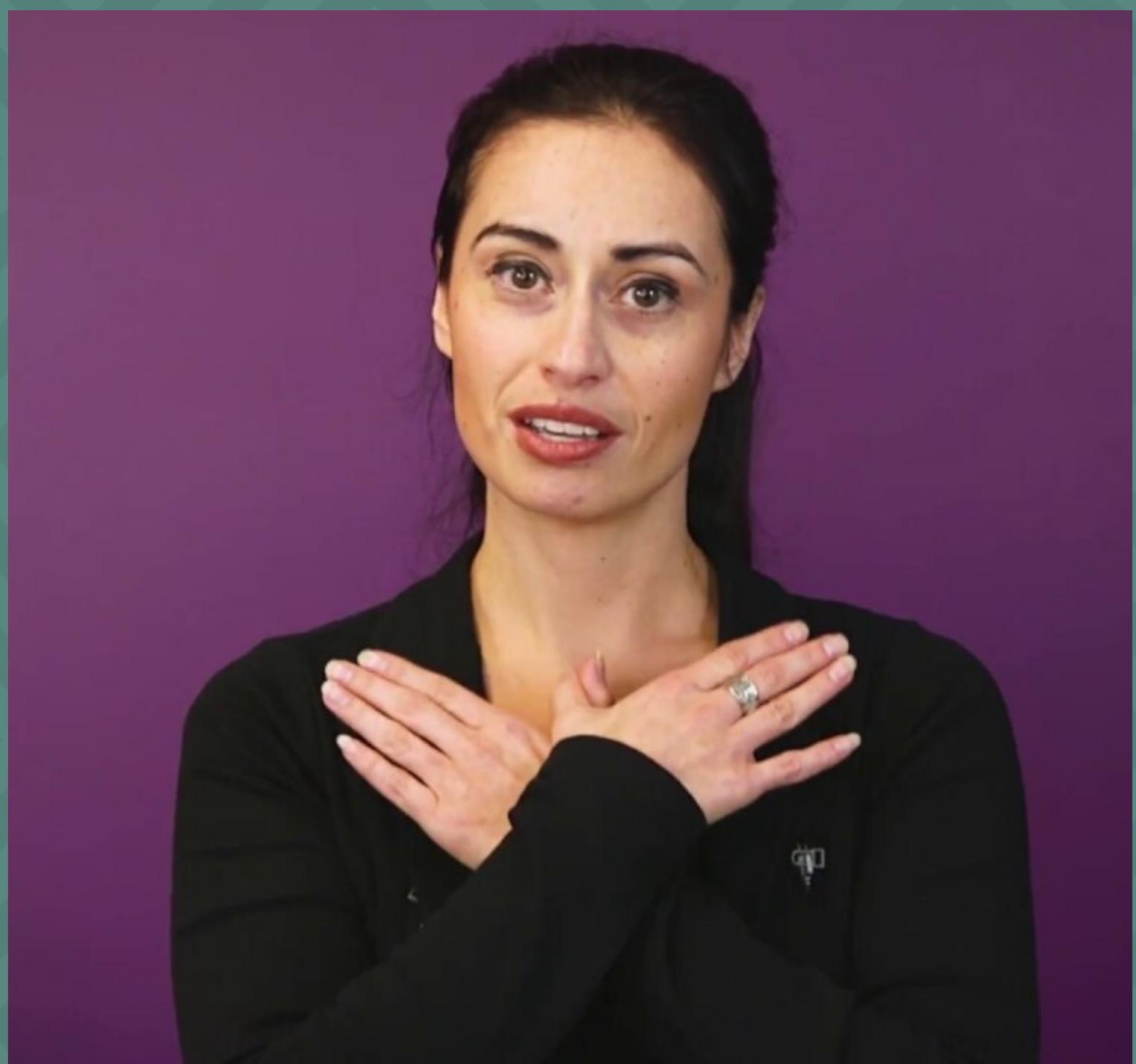
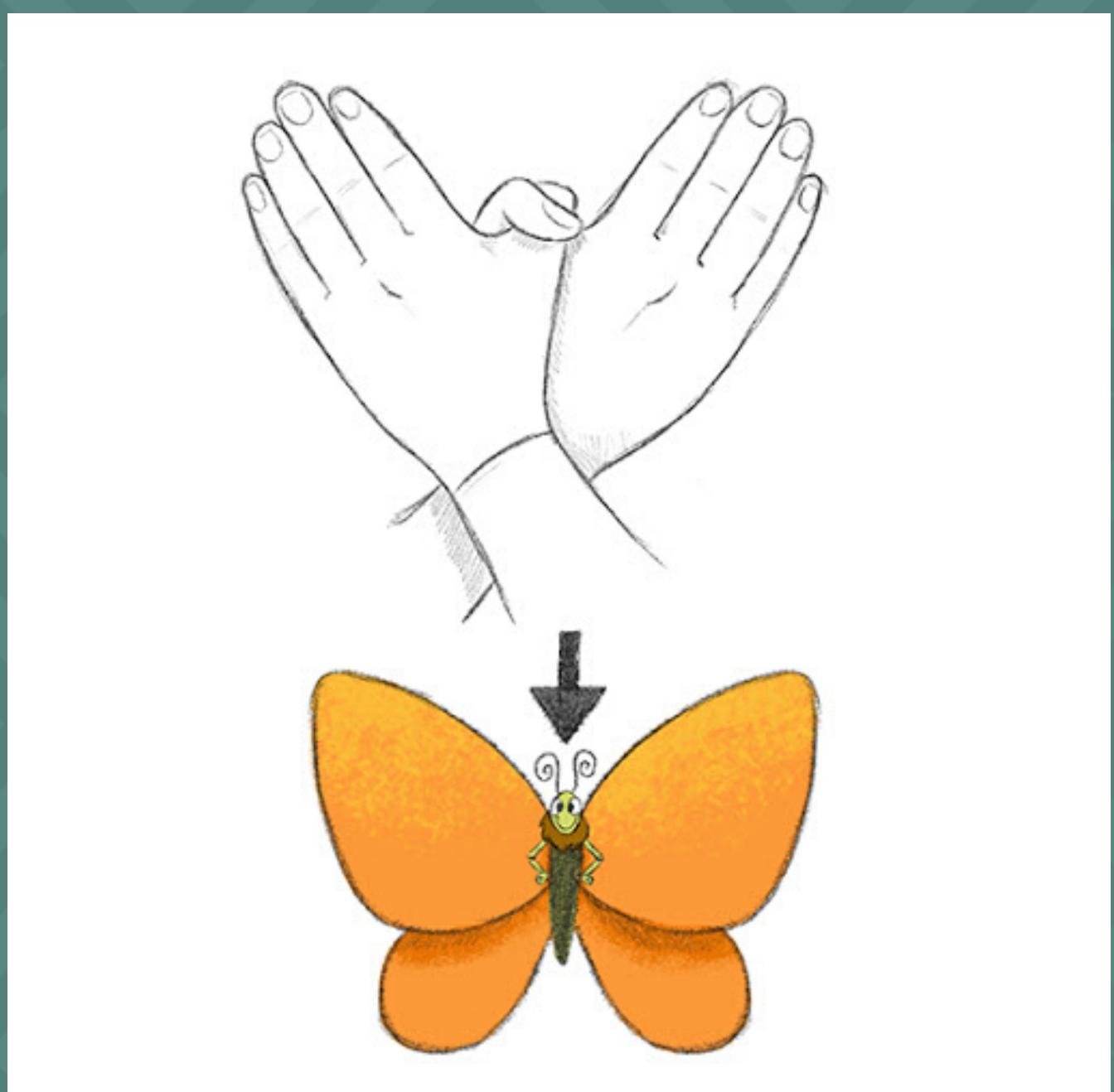


# "BILATERAL STIMULATION" OR "BUTTERFLY TAPPING".

WCCI May Resiliency Skill

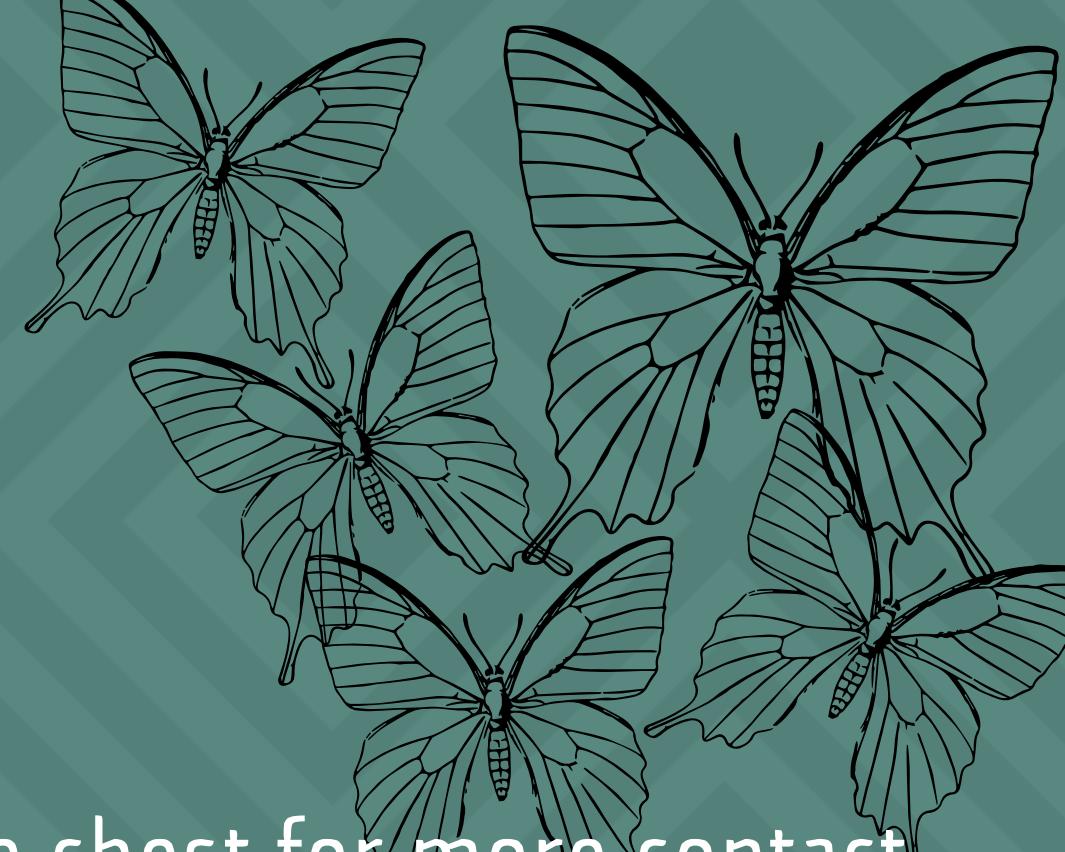


Cross your arms comfortably over your chest and allow the hands to rest on each opposite upper arm. Begin gently tapping, alternating each tap with the whole hand, or using just one to two fingers. If tapping is uncomfortable, use gentle, alternate squeezes. Use 4 extended exhales breathing in the nose and out the mouth through pursed lips to extend the exhale. Close eyes or soften gaze then breathe normal for 2 minutes.



# BUTTERFLY HUG

Blue Mountain Center for Integrative Health



- Place one palm over the center of your chest.
- Place other palm on top of first, pressing gently into the chest for more contact.
- Thumbs will be close to each other. If comfortable, touch thumbprints lightly together.
- Fingers will be pointing diagonally up toward collarbone, out toward shoulder, perhaps
- forming a butterfly shape with your hands.
- Feel the warm pressure of the palms as you breathe gently, comfortably deeply.
- You could imagine with each inhale, breathing warmth and calming or caring through the
- hands into your heart or into your whole body.
- Feel the firm pressure of your fingers against the chest in sort of a mini-hug.

Experiment with:

- holding the fingers still,
- giving yourself a gentle massage with your fingers, palms remaining in place, or
- gently tapping right fingers, then left fingers, right, left, about 1 tap per second
- ignoring fingers, keeping focus on the warm contact of your palms on the chest

Choose the one that feels best and continue for as long as you wish,  
focusing on the sensations of comforting warm pressure, breathing slowly.

*Calms anxiety, stress, anger, emotional pain. Is comforting, soothing.*

*Can help one move through grief.*

*Promotes a sense of safety within oneself.*

## 4-8 BREATH

Blue Mountain Center for Integrative Health

*This is a counted breathing technique specifically for self-calming. There are many other counted breathing techniques that are helpful for different purposes, but this one seems to be the best for calming stress or anxiety. It's easy to learn and remember, but still will become more effective with practice.*

Count in a steady rhythm to yourself as you do this:

Count slowly to 4 as you inhale.

Count slowly to 8\* as you exhale.

Repeat as many times as you wish until you feel more calm.

Stretch the inhales and exhales out over the entire count for each.

Pace your counting so that you're breathing more slowly than normal but still comfortable, getting plenty of oxygen.

\*Count only to 6 or 7 on the exhale if 8 is uncomfortable.

Effectiveness increases with practice, even just a few times a day. Before sleep is a great time for this practice.



# SENSING IN

Blue Mountain Center for Integrative Health

- As you go through your day, Intentionally look around you for any sensory input that is pleasing to you in some way, as you see, smell, touch, taste or hear it. This pleasant sensory input could be, for example, gentle melodic music or nature sounds, soft or smooth textures, pretty colors or scenes, pleasant fragrances or tastes.
- It could also come from inside you, a particularly pleasant sensation of relaxation or peace or happiness.
- You'll know it's a good choice if you have an internal experience of something like warmth, a smile, a sparkle, an inner calming, feeling drawn to it.
- Pause when you notice it, focus on it and physically experience it with the sense or senses that are appropriate.
- Breathe in through your nose slowly and calmly as you notice it, with an intention of absorbing its pleasant qualities, as if you could breathe them in with the air you're inhaling, and simultaneously imagine sort of pulling them in through your skin, as if you were a sponge.
- On the slow exhale, let those qualities settle into your body in a comforting, calming way.
- Even one slow breath cycle of noticing and absorbing can shift the nervous system from stressed (sympathetic nervous system dominance) to calm (parasympathetic nervous system dominance). If you can do two or three breaths before moving on (15-30 seconds), the benefits can be strengthened, and the memory will tend to be more clear.
- After just a few days of the practice described above, many people notice that they are becoming more aware of pleasant things they come across, and that when they remember to use the technique of pausing and “sensing in” before going on to the next task, even with just one breath cycle and even just a few times a day, they are calmer and generally feel better -- more positive, less stressed -- throughout the day.
- The effects can be further enhanced by taking a few moments before sleep to jot down what pleasant sensations you remember noticing during that day, and “sensing in” the memory of the earlier experience.



# SIMPLE GROUNDING MOMENTS

Resources for Resilience

## Feet on the Floor/Ground

Stand comfortably. Notice the pressure on the bottoms of your feet in contact with what's beneath them -- sock, sandal, ground, carpet, pavement. You might enhance the sensation by pressing down with one foot, then the other, or with different parts of your feet. Breathe gently and appreciate how this floor/ground/pavement is solidly supporting your feet

## Sitting

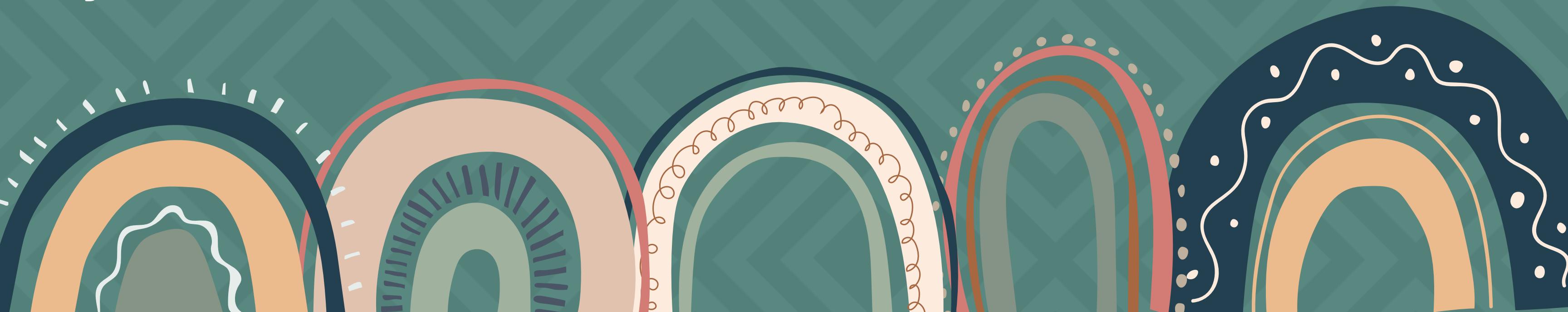
Sit in a sturdy chair. Breathe gently and comfortably. Pull your focus inside and notice the places where your body makes contact with that chair. This will usually be under your hips and legs, and behind your back. Just notice the sensations, and appreciate that this chair is holding you, is supporting the weight of your body.

## Leaning

Where there is a sturdy wall or door jam or check-out counter or kitchen counter, lean your hip (and perhaps part of your upper torso if it's high enough) against it so that it is supporting some of your weight. Or lean your back and hips against a wall or door jam, and let your knees bend a little with your feet a bit away from the wall. Breathe comfortably and notice from inside your body the sensations you can notice at the points of contact. Appreciate that this wall/doorway/counter is strong and steady and can hold your weight.

## Pushing

Find a spot where you can stand next to a sturdy wall or closed door. Stretch out your arms and place your palms on the wall at a little below shoulder height. Move your feet back away from the wall to a comfortable distance, so that you lean more weight against it. Be curious about leaning vs. pushing as you try both. Try pushing harder if you're comfortable, and notice the pressure of your palms against the wall, and the way that pressure feels up through your arms and shoulders, in your back and torso, in your legs. Notice and appreciate how solid that wall or door is, that it holds your weight even with the stronger pressure against it.



# 4321 GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

## WCCI Resiliency Skill

What is important is really concentrating on your senses. It doesn't matter if you repeat yourself or if you confuse how many times for each. All that matters is that you are truly seeing, hearing or feeling (touching) what you say you are perceiving. It is best to keep your head and body relatively still while doing this. The purpose is to relax your body and mind and remain focused on the here and now. You will get better and better with practice.

Do you and say each as a sentence

Four things you see:

I see \_\_\_\_\_ I see \_\_\_\_\_ I see \_\_\_\_\_ I see \_\_\_\_\_

Four things you hear:

I hear \_\_\_\_\_ I hear \_\_\_\_\_ I hear \_\_\_\_\_ I hear \_\_\_\_\_

Four things you feel (that your body is touching right now):

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ I feel \_\_\_\_\_ I feel \_\_\_\_\_ I feel \_\_\_\_\_

Three things you see:

I see \_\_\_\_\_ I see \_\_\_\_\_ I see \_\_\_\_\_

Three things you hear:

I hear \_\_\_\_\_ I hear \_\_\_\_\_ I hear \_\_\_\_\_

Three things you feel (that your body is touching right now):

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ I feel \_\_\_\_\_ I feel \_\_\_\_\_

Two things you see:

I see \_\_\_\_\_ I see \_\_\_\_\_

Two things you hear:

I hear \_\_\_\_\_ I hear \_\_\_\_\_

Two things you feel (that your body is touching right now):

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ I feel \_\_\_\_\_

One thing you see:

I see \_\_\_\_\_

One thing you hear:

I hear \_\_\_\_\_

One thing you feel (that your body is touching right now):

I feel \_\_\_\_\_



# Resiliency v Self Care

The following skills were suggested by members to help practice self care. The following skills are not necessarily based in research, and are suggested as skills that have helped individual members.

**Mindfulness** --For researchers, it's not just being calm or relaxed, and it's not just letting your mind wander around from one random thought to the next. It involves practices that help us learn to be present, being here right now, improving our ability to focus, with a component of non-judgement or acceptance. It's a skill that can be practiced and developed. There are simple behaviors that help us increase our ability to be in this state, which increases our resiliency and makes other positive changes in the brain for health and better functioning.

**Self Care**-Self-care is the action that an individual takes in order to reach optimal physical and mental health



# SELF CARE SKILLS

WCCI Members Share Their Favorite Skills

- **Practice tolerating uncertainty-** Intolerance of uncertainty, which has been increasing in the U.S., makes people vulnerable to anxiety. The solution is to learn to gradually face uncertainty in daily life by easing back on certainty-seeking behaviors.
- **Tackle the anxiety paradox-** Allow your anxious thoughts, feelings and physical sensations to wash over you, accepting anxiety as an integral part of human experience. When waves of coronavirus anxiety show up, notice and describe the experience to yourself or others without judgment.
- **Transcend existential anxiety-** Try connecting to your life's purpose and sources of meaning, be it spirituality, relationships, or pursuit of a cause. Embark on something important that you've been putting off for years and take responsibility for how you live your life. Focusing on or discovering the "why" of life can go a long way in helping you deal with unavoidable anxiety.
- **Don't underestimate human resiliency-** Be mindful that you are more resilient than you think. It can help attenuate your anxiety.
- **Don't get sucked into overestimating the threat-** To reduce anxiety, I recommend limiting your exposure to coronavirus news to no more than 30 minutes per day
- **Strengthen self-care-** Get adequate sleep, exercise regularly, practice mindfulness, spend time in nature and employ relaxation techniques when stressed. Prioritizing these behaviors during the coronavirus crisis can go a long way toward increasing your psychological well being and bolstering your immune system.
- **Seek professional help if you need it-** . Although you might feel helpless during this stressful time, seeking professional help from your doctor or a mental health professional can help keep anxiety from becoming a problem in its own right and enable you to make it through the epidemic more effectively.

# SELF CARE SKILLS

## WCCI Members Share Their Favorite Skills

- Instead of focusing on what we can't do, concentrating on what we can. I am tackling a goal-list of things to get done in the house: organizing, painting, simplifying. And helping my kids do the same. I've asked them, what is something you enjoy that you would like to do more or learn about? For one child, it is drawing, and I've pulled out an old book of exercises that he is working his way through. For another child, it is science, and we spent this morning looking at youtube videos with simple experiments. My high schooler has made a similar goal-list and checks in with me on her progress.
- Taking regular breaks from media and especially the news: only during certain hours of the day, and no news/talk of coronavirus on Sundays.
- Taking time to rest, play, laugh and reflect on beauty: listening to music, playing family games, telling jokes, taking bubble baths, planning the garden.
- Moving: maintaining exercise routines and encouraging the kids to use pent-up energy in physical ways, like playing catch, hopping on an exercise ball.
- Trying new things: recipes with spices we don't usually use and new ways to prepare basic staples.
- Keeping simple family rituals: taking time each morning to debrief on our plans for the day, what is happening in the world, and to pray for others. Staying connected to spiritual community via livestream.
- Reaching out: texts, emails, phone calls, cards and letters. The children are participating

# SELF CARE SKILLS

## WCCI Members Share Their Favorite Skills

- Take time to breath. Inhale and exhale deeply 10 times, drink plenty of water, for those that are desk bound, be sure to get up once an hour to move around and walk.
- During these challenging times, take time to take good care of you. Take time to call 3 folks you know, reach out to 3 others that you may not know as well with a note or inquiry if in need of help. We know that these key core protective factors build and sustain resilience: maintaining social support and connection; finding small ways to give back/offer time & talent; engage in meaningful activity/offer help; having a sense of belonging; practice gratitude/say thank you; and practice mindful moments – listen, watch or feel your heart beat, listen to the birds sing, watch the clouds, touch a leaf, or smell the breeze through a deep breath and longer exhale; smile; and be amazed. Practical refreshers and tools for Self-care & Coping Skills can be found here: <https://www.yourlifeyourvoice.org/pages/tip-99-coping-skills.aspx> [yourlifeyourvoice.org]
- Find emotional support and help any time day or night at National Disaster Helpline 1-800-985-5990 or text 'TalkWithUs' to 66746 National Helpline or text - trained responder to calls 24/7 -supportive listening, emotional support all ages, directs to state BH and other supports (financial, food, etc.)
- I have discovered that exercise is one of the best things I can do to stay even. The more I move, the better I feel. This goes for my kids as well. They need lots of active time throughout the day.

# SELF CARE SKILLS

WCCI Members Share Their Favorite Skills

- Keeping a regular routine of daily morning exercise helps me a lot. I do Yoga with Adriene videos from YouTube and have also added a walk outside (maintaining social distancing). Being consistent makes the practice easier to maintain. I do it first thing so I have less chance to get derailed.
- Staying connected with friends and family on a daily basis, whether through Facetime, telephone calls, etc.
- Getting outside whenever possible. Whether that's just sitting out on the porch instead of inside if you're working from home or going out in nature, being outside can really help. Being out in nature often goes hand in hand with exercise, and I believe there is documented research for both with regard to coping with stress and improving mood. I live in a pretty rural area, so I've been blessed with still being able to walk my dogs or go for a run without the risk of catching anything or spreading anything harmful to others.
- Staying on a schedule.
- Focusing on what you can do for others.
- Taking advantage of time at home to do things that you ordinarily might not get to do. Thinking of the time as "I get to..." rather than "I have to."
- There is something a friend shared the other day that I thought was really encouraging and cool, I'll attach it to this email.
- Like Mr. Rogers said, "Look for the helpers."

# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

WCCI Members Share Resources They Love!



Mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak

CDC Suggestions on Stress & Coping

Conscious Discipline: COVID-19: Five Helpful Responses for Families

Mindfulness Meditation

Positive Steps to Wellbeing

Grounding Techniques

Benefits of outdoor exercise confirmed

