

# The Spring/Summer of 2021: Less Stress - More Fun

## **INSPIRE'S TIPS**

### **FAMILY COMMUNICATIONS**

**10 Tips** on how to converse productively with family/friends so everyone feels safe to express their emotions:

1. Use direct and specific questions/statements that are 10 words or less.
2. Let your child complete his/her thoughts before responding.
3. Restate what you are hearing or ask a question to confirm that you understand.
4. Stay on topic and in the present.
5. Use a neutral/natural tone of voice.
6. Be constructive and compassionate.
7. Find common ground.
8. Express your feelings with simple "I" statements (I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_).
9. Take a deep breath and pause to gather your thoughts when needed.
10. Ask to continue the conversation at another time if you need to take a break.

Remember to talk during 'good times, **not** just when a serious matter, crisis, or major decision is to be confronted. Establish your ability to listen, be empathetic, flexible and fair BEFORE the conversations occur where the stakes are high.

### **SELF-CARE PRACTICE**

**Mindfulness** – meditation, deep breathing (even 5 minutes is great) Insight Timer App

**Behavioral awareness** - Time Management – discern when to say "No", ask for help or support when needed

**Healthy Diet** – prioritize fruits and vegetables, hydrate

**Sleep** – 8 hours a night, no electronics in your bedroom

**Suggested Reading:** EAT YOURSELF CALM by GILL PAUL

Various Works by BRENE BROWN, PEMA CHODRON

### **WRITING TO HEAL**

Writing is a powerful means of self-expression that can alleviate stress and enhance well-being. 40 years of nationally recognized research has connected the process of writing our feelings down on paper to better health: reducing heart rate and blood pressure, minimizing stress, strengthening the immune system and improving your self-esteem.

- Write only for yourself. Keep a private journal or destroy the paper after you have written.
- Don't be concerned with punctuation, spelling and grammar. If you run out of things to say, repeat what you have written in a different way. Keep pen on paper until it feels right to stop with a maximum of 20 minute sessions.
- Try different types of writing: a personal narrative or a letter to someone, tell a story or write about your values or life-lessons, or hopes and dreams...write what you see as your best future.
- Identify what 'keeps you up at night' and express it with pen and paper for only you to read.
- Give time to reflect on how you feel after writing. If it becomes TOO emotional to write about something, STOP. Be patient and compassionate with yourself.

## WHY?

Caring for your self is one of the most important –and one of the most forgotten— things that you can do as a parent and caregiver. Only when we first tend to our own needs can we effectively help others.

It is essential to establish a strong self-care regimen to sustain the demands of caring for others. An effective plan will vary for each individual and may require some trial and error.

INSPIRE provides wellness programs to assist local families reduce their stress. Close relationships amongst family members are a critical component to good health. Conflicts are often born out of unexpressed emotions. When people feel seen, heard and understood about the issues that are most important to them conflicts are easier to resolve and prolonged stress is avoided. For this reason, Inspire's focus is to relieve stress through offering techniques to attain a healthy emotional lifestyle.

All of our programs are evidence-based and scientifically supported.

### Lauren Lanham

has been a yoga and meditation teacher for over 25 years. She holds certifications from The White Lotus Foundation and Amrit Yoga Foundation.

Lauren is a Reiki Master. She has also completed facilitator trainings in the *Creating Lasting Family Connections Program* and in the *QPR - Suicide Prevention Program*.

Along with Nancy, Lauren was an advisor to the First Selectman during establishment of the Town of Fairfield's Community Coalition on Alcohol and Health, now called Fairfield CARES, of which she is a founding member. Lauren holds a B.A. in French Literature from George Washington University.

### Nancy Billington

has held leadership roles in educational advocacy in Fairfield for over 25 years. She established innovative school and community programs to address gender equity, athletic codes, and underage alcohol and substance use. She founded Fairfield's Alcohol Use Prevention Task Force and co-founded Fairfield's Freshman Forum on Underage Drinking. She was an advisor to the First Selectman during establishment of the Town of Fairfield's Community Coalition on Alcohol and Health, now called Fairfield CARES, of which she is a founding member. Nancy has completed facilitator training in the nationally recognized *Creating Lasting Family Connections program*.

She holds a B.S. in Communications from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University.

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