



# ESSEX COUNTY OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH MANAGEMENT

IN COLLABORATION WITH BLOOMFIELD DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

# HEALTHY MONDAY'S TOOL KIT: DECEMBER 2024



900 Bloomfield Avenue  
Verona, NJ 07044

Happy  
Holidays



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## **WHAT IS THE HEALTHY MONDAY CAMPAIGN?**

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Even though we are encouraged to stay healthy every day. The healthy Monday campaign is Healthy Monday, a public health initiative that encourages individuals and organizations to commit to healthy behaviors every Monday to help prevent chronic diseases.

From the Essex County, Healthy Monday will focus on children and their parent and providing them with a toolkit every Monday that will focus on a different topics per month that are pertinent to children from K-12.

Welcome to the Essex County Healthy Monday Campaign for the month of December with ways to distress being the main topic.

# LESSON 01: MEDITATION AND MINDFULNESS

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One of the many ways to destress is through mindfulness meditation. Environments can be very stressful, so it is important for one to be aware of the stress levels in their environment and know how to use mindfulness meditation to lower their stress levels.

According to the American Psychological Association mindfulness meditation has proven to be a highly effective way to reduce stress and improve physical and mental health. The therapeutic intervention can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. On a deeper level it can also reduce the risk of addiction, pain, and smoking. It can drastically reduce the chances of relapse for those who are in recovery from addiction and major depression. Other studies have shown that mindfulness meditation can contribute to rapid recovery from cold or flu illnesses.

## Breathing

Breathing is the basic necessity of life. Just as little to no air can be detrimental to one's health over breathing or hyperventilation can cause more harm than good. Proper controlled breathing is the foundation of mindfulness meditation. By one paying attention to their breathing they can ground themselves within the reality and promote clear and concise thoughts. Taking a few deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth can help one focus in the present and lower their stress levels that developed from their environment.

## Clearing Your Mind

This concept makes a major difference within mindfulness meditation. Stress can deter the mind away from calm and sensible thinking. Such ways can contribute to high levels of anxiety and depression. By clearing and calming your mind peaceful thoughts can be developed and provide one with the mental tools needed to reduce stress and develop solutions.

# LESSON 01: MEDITATION AND MINDFULNESS

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## Taking a Walk

Taking a walk outdoors can challenge one's sense of sight. According to the American Psychological Association anything ranging from strolling through the park or hiking in the woods can significantly lower stress. It has been proven that the components of nature (colors, shapes, sounds, etc...) can create chemical and hormonal secretions within one's brain that are needed to reduce stress.

## Creative Expression

Many people can benefit from creative expression. Creative Expression is the ability to express oneself positively through art, writing, music, and etc... This method of expression can be very therapeutic in various ways. One of which lowers stress, and improves emotional wellbeing. Art therapy, music therapy and other creative therapies are useful for those struggling with depression, anxiety, and other mental health concerns.

## Mental Health

Engaging in activities like writing can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression by providing an outlet for emotions and a space to positively and safely express all of ones thoughts and feelings.

## Social Connection

Activities like photography could be a great way to interact within your surroundings and help build relationships with the people around you. Take a group of friends who love photography and go around the town or area such as a mall, park, or hiking trail. Once done use the time to view, share, and improve on photography skills. This can help create and develop healthy friendships.



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Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr., Essex County Executive  
The Board of County Commissioners  
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## Meditation and Mindfulness

**Meditation and mindfulness can help you stay present and calm amidst the vhaos of daily life. Here are some tips to help you practice mediation and mindfulness:**

### **Breathing:**

**Take time to control your breathing. This can help calm your mind .**

**Clear Your Mind:  
Sprinkle some kindness and watch peaceful and calm thoughts take over.**

**Find A Quiet Spot:  
Move to a quiet area free of any pesky distractions.**

**Five Senses:  
Engaging in your surrouddings like sounds, smells, and textures can help you be more in the present.**





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## Meditation and Mindfulness

**Meditation and mindfulness can help you stay present and calm amidst the chaos of daily life. Here are some tips to help you practice meditation and mindfulness:**

**Find a Quiet Space by moving to a peaceful location without any distractions.**

**Clear Your Mind:  
Remember to be kind to your mind. Gently bring your focus to peaceful and calm thoughts.**

**Breathing:  
Take time to control your breathing. This can help calm your mind.**

**Five Senses:  
Engaging in your surroundings like sounds, smells, and textures can help you be more in the present.**



# LESSON 02: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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**Physical activity offers numerous benefits for children and teenagers, both in terms of their physical health and overall well-being. Here are some key benefits:**

## 1. Physical Health:

- **Healthy Growth and Development:** Regular physical activity promotes healthy growth and development of muscles, bones, and joints.
- **Cardiovascular Health:** It improves cardiovascular fitness, strengthens the heart, and lowers the risk of heart disease.
- **Weight Management:** Helps maintain a healthy weight by burning calories and reducing fat accumulation.
- **Motor Skills:** Enhances coordination, balance, and flexibility, which are crucial for performing daily tasks and participating in sports.

## 2. Mental and Emotional Well-being:

- **Mood Enhancement:** Physical activity stimulates the release of endorphins, which can improve mood and reduce feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression.
- **Cognitive Benefits:** Regular exercise is linked to improved cognitive function, including better concentration, memory, and academic performance.
- **Sleep:** Promotes better sleep patterns, helping children and teens to fall asleep faster and enjoy deeper sleep.

# LESSON 02: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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## 3. Social Development:

- **Teamwork and Cooperation:** Participating in team sports fosters teamwork, cooperation, and leadership skills.
- **Social Interaction:** Provides opportunities to make friends and develop social skills through group activities and sports.
- **Confidence and Self-esteem:** Achieving physical goals and improving skills can boost confidence and self-esteem.

## 4. Long-term Benefits:

- **Establishing Healthy Habits:** Encourages the development of lifelong habits of physical activity and exercise.
- **Reduced Risk of Chronic Diseases:** Regular physical activity during childhood and adolescence can reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases later in life, such as type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, and certain cancers.

Overall, regular physical activity is crucial for the holistic development of children and teenagers, promoting both physical health and emotional well-being, while laying the foundation for a healthy lifestyle into adulthood.



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# Physical Activity



**Social Skills :**  
Participating in team sports or group activities encourages children to interact with their peers, fostering important social skills such as cooperation, communication, and teamwork.

**Better Sleep :**  
Regular physical activity can improve the quality of children's sleep, helping them fall asleep faster and enjoy deeper, more restorative sleep

**Physical Health:**  
Regular physical activity helps children build strong muscles and bones, maintain a healthy weight and reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases such as obesity





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# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

## Mental Health:

Exercise has been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression in teenagers.

## Academic Performance:

Exercise improves concentration, memory, and cognitive function, which can help teenagers focus better in school and perform well academically.



## Healthy Habits for Life:

If teenagers develop a love for physical activity early on, they are more likely to continue being active into adulthood, reducing their risk of chronic diseases later in life.

## Social Skills and Confidence:

It can boost self-esteem and confidence as teenagers achieve goals and overcome challenges.

# LESSON 03: CREATIVE EXPRESSION

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Many people can benefit from creative expression. Creative Expression is the ability to express oneself positively through art, writing, music, and etc... This method of expression can be very therapeutic in various ways. One of which lowers stress, and improves emotional wellbeing. Art therapy, music therapy and other creative therapies are useful for those struggling with depression, anxiety and other mental health concerns

## **Mental Health**

Engaging in activities like writing can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression by providing an outlet for emotions and a space to positively and safely express all of one thoughts and feelings.

## **Emotional Well Being**

Engaging in activities such as listening or playing music can help positively change or sway ones emotions. Playing instruments or listening to music can help on relax and promote clear thinking and relaxation. There are several studies that show that music can significantly help lower stress which in term helps lower cortisol levels. Cortisol is a chemical in the human body that is created from stress. High amounts of cortisol can become very dangerous and can be a threat to ones health.

## **Social Connection**

Activities like photography could be a great way to interact within your surroundings and help build relationships with the people around you. Take a group of friends who love photography and go around the town or area such as a mall, park or hiking trail. Once done use the time to view, share and improve on photography skills. This can help create and develop healthy friendships.



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## SHOW YOUR

# CREATIVITY!

**HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO EXPRESS YOURSELF WITH A BIG  
SPLASH OF POSITIVITY!**



**PAINTING**



**MUSIC**



**DRAWING OR WRITING**



**TAKING PICTURES**



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## EXPRESS YOUR

# CREATIVITY!

**ENGAGING IN CREATIVE ACTIVITIES CAN HELP YOU EXPRESS YOURSELF FREELY AND POSITIVELY!**



**PAINTING**



**MUSIC**



**DRAWING OR WRITING**



**PHOTOGRAPHY**



# LESSON 04: SPENDING TIME IN NATURE

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**There are several ways to improve one's mental, physical, and emotional health. One of those ways is spending time in nature. Take the time to ride a bike, hang out with friends, journaling, taking a walk, or just simply take in your surroundings. By taking the time to try out these activities you will notice a significant and noticeable improvement in your health.**

## **Mental Health**

Spending time in Nature can improve your health in many ways. One way is through your mental health. Spending time in nature can help change the levels of stress, depression, and anxiety you may be feeling. The fresh air alone can help make you feel much better if you are going through or struggling with something. Several researchers found that being outdoors can help with many stressful environments or situations one may be going through. The Mayo Clinic Stated "research indicates that exposure to nature can be an effective coping strategy for those with chronic mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

## **Physical Health**

Spending time in nature can also improve your health physically. Simply by being outside and in the sun your body will have reacted to that as well. By spending time safely in the sun your body's Vitamin D3 levels will increase. This increase can help strengthen your bones and improve your overall health. Taking that time you relax and lower your stress levels can decrease your risk of high blood pressure and heart disease. Breathing in fresh air can improve your respiratory health. Healthy lungs are very important. The calming effects of nature can also improve your sleep and your vision. Natural light can help regulate one's sleep patterns and encourage rest! Many hours under fluorescent lights can have a negative impact on your body but spending time outdoors safely in the sun can change that.



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## Spending Time in Nature

Nature works its magic on your body. Here are some outdoor ideas to help untangle your mind.

Play with friends!



Check out the trees!



Catch up with friends!

Go for a walk!





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## Spending Time in Nature

Nature has a calming influence on the body. Here are some suggestions for outdoor activities to help you unwind.

Go on a bike ride!



Try Journaling!



Catch up with friends!

Go for a walk!



**AS THE HOLIDAY SEASON APPROACHES, WE WANT TO EXTEND  
OUR WARMEST WISHES TO ALL FAMILIES. MAY THIS TIME BE  
FILLED WITH JOY, RELAXATION, AND GOOD HEALTH. AS YOU  
GATHER WITH LOVED ONES, REMEMBER TO TAKE TIME FOR  
YOURSELVES AND PRIORITIZE  
WELL-BEING. WISHING YOU A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY  
SEASON, AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO SUPPORTING YOUR  
HEALTHY HABITS IN THE NEW YEAR! STAY WELL AND TAKE  
CARE.**

**FROM,  
THE ESSEX COUNTY OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH MANAGEMENT**

# RESOURCES

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022a, July 26). Youth physical activity guidelines. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/guidelines.htm>

Creativity for kids: Benefits & tips for nurturing an innovative mind. Maryville University Online. (2023, October 17). <https://online.maryville.edu/online-bachelors-degrees/psychology/resources/creativity-for-kids-benefits-tips-for-nurturing-an-innovative-mind/>