

AGING & independence

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
AGING & INDEPENDENCE SERVICES

Steps to Make Spirits Bright in the New Year

By Kim Gallo
Director, Aging & Independence Services

It is supposed to be “the most wonderful time of the year,” but as the holiday season gives way to a fresh new year, many of us feel tired, lonely, sad, and restless to return to regular life. Over the past 10 months, some people have experienced profound loss, such as the death of a loved one, unemployment, or persistent isolation. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic drags on. Even with an approved vaccine making its way into Americans’ arms, the early months of 2021 may be some of the darkest days of the pandemic with cases and deaths spiking all across the country.



In order to slow the spread and preserve limited hospital capacity, Californians are yet again experiencing the closure of local non-essential businesses and activities, such as in-person dining. Everyone is being urged to avoid gathering with others outside of their household—especially older adults and those with underlying health conditions. With many of the people and places we love and enjoy currently out of reach, it is no wonder so many people report feeling down or fatigued. Fortunately, there are steps we can take to shore up our mental health and make each day a little bit brighter.

Caroline Atterton, Lead Therapist at Sharp Mesa Vista’s Senior Intensive Outpatient program shares a helpful acronym that patients are encouraged to refer to daily to promote self care and focus on positive things that are within

their control: GRAPES.

Gratitude: Cultivating gratitude can help boost our mood by encouraging our minds to focus on what we do have in our lives, rather than what we don’t have. Did you enjoy a warm meal? See a beautiful sunset? Receive a phone call from a friend? When we train our minds to look for things we are thankful for, we get better at

counting our blessings even in the midst of a pandemic and uncertainty. This doesn’t mean that we ignore struggles and problems, but that we do not allow hardship to overshadow the positives in our lives.

Relaxation: During difficult times, we might find our minds going haywire. Anxiety about the virus, our health, loved ones, or economic concerns can keep our brains in “high alert” mode. We need to give our minds and bodies a rest from stress. Try yoga, meditation, or deep breathing to help quiet your mind. Visualize positive, calming imagery. And, be sure to prioritize getting a good night’s sleep.

Accomplishment: Pick one thing that you’d really like to do each day. It can be simple, such as taking a shower, scheduling an important appointment, or organizing a drawer. What would you feel good about accomplishing?

Pleasure: Give yourself the gift of a warm cup of hot chocolate, an episode of your favorite TV show, or a trip to

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CORONAVIRUS UPDATES:

Visit www.coronavirus-sd.com.



LIVE WELL
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the beach for a walk. What can you add into your day that will be enjoyable and make you feel good?

Exercise: Yes, it can be tempting to stay on the couch, but you will likely feel so much better if you get up and go for a walk or bike ride. Even short bursts of 10 minutes of activity are enough to support good mental and physical health. Taking the first steps can be challenging, but the immediate and long-term rewards will be worth it. And, don't forget about brain health. Give your brain a workout by doing puzzles, learning a new skill, or taking up a new hobby.

Socialization: Connect, connect, connect! Pick up the phone and call a relative, make a video call to a friend, or send a letter or card in the mail. Although we need to stay *physically* distant right now to keep safe, we should remain socially and emotionally connected to friends and family. Nurture those relationships that we have, or perhaps reach out to an old friend or family member you have lost touch with. Meeting with new people online via virtual classes and support groups is another option to help you feel more connected.

In addition to following GRAPES, Caroline encourages people to be observant of their thoughts. She notes, "Be on the lookout for catastrophic thoughts. It can be easy for our brains to jump to the worst-case scenario." And while she notes that it is completely normal for people to have thoughts such as "I wish things were different," people can get stuck and focus exclusively on their negative thoughts and feelings. Instead of being fixated on the negative or completely trying to suppress negativity or not feel emotions, accept your thoughts and feelings as valid and real. But, aim to keep perspective and introduce healthy and balanced thoughts throughout the day.

Caroline also notes that regardless of how we feel in any given moment, we can make the choice to take action that aligns with our values. For example, if health is something you value, there may be small steps you can take to look after your health in regard to exercise, diet, sleep, or alcohol use.

People of all ages, but perhaps especially older adults, need to feel that they are leading meaningful and purposeful lives. Volunteer work is a great way to lend a hand to others, but fewer opportunities are available during the pandemic. Some organizations are offering virtual opportunities (see the blue box on Page 3). However, Caroline notes that

"Simply doing something positive for someone else—one good deed, one small compliment, one hand-written note of appreciation goes a long way." We can brighten our own spirits in addition to those of the recipient of our good deed.

Sometimes the person most in need of a kind word or a kind act is looking back at us in the mirror. It is especially important that we treat ourselves with compassion and gentleness during hard times. Don't be self-critical if you aren't able to meet a goal or if you make a mistake. Remember that many people are struggling right now and our routines and support systems may be out of whack.

And, if you are experiencing thoughts and feelings that are interfering with daily life (e.g., unable to sleep, eat, think clearly, or take care of yourself or others), or are having thoughts of harming yourself or a loved one, it may be time to reach out for professional help. Despite the pandemic, mental health services are still available, both in virtual and in-person formats. For instance, Sharp Mesa Vista's Senior Intensive Outpatient program serves adults 60 and older. The program provides treatment for mood disorders, such as depression and anxiety, in a setting that recognizes the challenges that older adults often face. Such challenges may include a loss of daily structure due to retirement, changes in one's health or mobility, loss of independence, or loss of friends and family members. Many of these challenges can lead to feelings of loneliness. By connecting with others who are also navigating the shared experience of older adulthood, participants learn helpful skills and strategies to manage distressing and painful thoughts while beginning to rebuild a meaningful and purposeful life.

In addition to using self-care tools like GRAPES and seeking out professional support, if needed, Caroline likes to remind older adults who may be struggling to look inside and realize how resilient they are. "Think of all of the things you have been through and overcome over your seven, eight, or nine decades," she says. "Look, you are still here and you have so much inner strength."

As we leave behind 2020, let's all resolve to make our mental wellness a priority—and to reach out to others to join us on the journey.

To learn more about Sharp's program, call **(858) 836-8309**. To learn more about the entire range of mental health programming and treatment options in the county, call the Access & Crisis line at **(888) 724-7240**. For additional mental health resources, refer to the green box on Page 3.

In the COMMUNITY

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

If you need mental health support or information, please connect with one or more of the following resources:

San Diego Access & Crisis Line (ACL): Confidential and free of charge, the ACL offers immediate support and resources from an experienced counselor 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on all behavioral health topics including: suicide prevention, crisis intervention, community resources, mental health referrals, alcohol and drug support services, and more. Language interpreter services enable the ACL to assist in 150 languages within seconds. Call **(888) 724-7240**.

National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI): The community's voice on mental illness, NAMI offers a Helpline, support groups, educational meetings, newsletters, a lending library and a number of classes on mental illness. Call **(800) 523-5933** or visit **www.namisaniego.org**. You can also connect with a trained crisis counselor to receive free crisis support via text 24 hours a day by texting NAMI to 741-741.

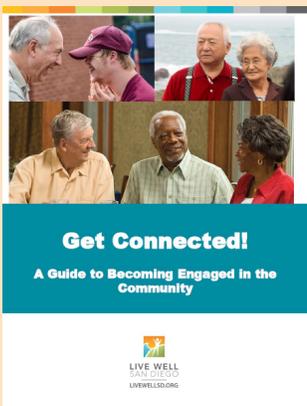
Optum Emotional Support Help Line is free and available to anyone, so you can share it with family and friends. Caring professionals connect callers to resources 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call **(866) 342-6892**.

VOLUNTEER FROM HOME

You can still make a difference in your community and beyond while staying safe at home. Check out virtual volunteer opportunities at AARP's Create the Good website: **http://createthegood.aarp.org**. Volunteer Match also lists a variety of meaningful virtual opportunities at **www.volunteermatch.org**. Be sure to check with your favorite local and national non-profit organizations, too. The American Cancer Society, American Red Cross, and Smithsonian Institute are just a few of the non-profits offering virtual opportunities. Finally, if you wish to go further afield with your virtual service, try opportunities coordinated by the United Nations at **www.onlinevolunteering.org**.

SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS

Many caregivers are living with increased stress, uncertainty, and isolation as the pandemic continues. Even though some services may look different right now, support is still available. The Caregiver Coalition of San Diego offers online resources, including recorded webinars, virtual workshops, links to other community programs, and a caregiver handbook. Visit **www.caregivercoalitionsd.org** to learn more. In addition, in-person and online respite care continues to be available through various organizations. To be connected with other helpful caregiver resources, call the AIS Call Center at **(800) 339-4661**.



AGE WELL RESOURCE ADDRESSES SOCIAL ISOLATION

Feeling a sense of connection and belonging is important for all of us and can positively impact our health. To help address social isolation, the Age Well San Diego Social Participation Team created ***Get Connected! A Guide to Becoming Engaged in the Community***. Specially adapted to be relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, the guide provides resources and strategies to help you get connected, whether you feel lonely, want to build connections to prevent loneliness, or are trying to help someone you know become more socially connected.

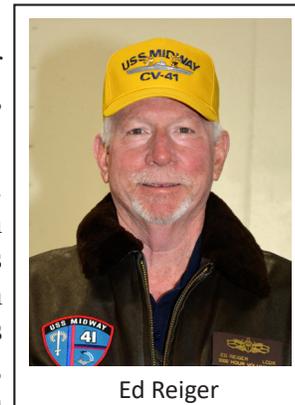
To access the guide, visit **www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov**, click on "COVID-19 Community Resources" and then "Social Engagement."



VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Ed Reiger, of the USS Midway Museum, was nominated to be the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Volunteer of the Month for December 2020 by Laurie Switzer, the Director of Volunteer Programs at the Midway.

Ed wears several hats at the museum when the museum is open and operating normally. As a docent, Ed shares information, personal experiences, and the “Midway Magic” with guests from around the world and from all walks of life. He inspires, educates, and entertains Midway guests. Ed is also a “Docent of the Watch,” a role in which he manages a team of docents. Additionally, Ed serves as the Group Projects Team Manager. The Team hosts corporate, youth, and military groups that volunteer to maintain the Midway. Each year, thousands of volunteers help to maintain the ship, often referred to as a “city at sea.” When he welcomes these groups, Ed likes to go above and beyond by offering them personal tours of any areas of the ship that are of particular interest.



Ed Reiger

Ed stands out because of his work ethic and his passion for supporting the Midway. He is enthusiastic, hard-working, friendly, and vivacious. Ed is a true representative of San Diego and its Navy Culture. Ed served as an active duty sailor as well as a reservist. Ed’s Navy service included Vietnam, Desert Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. In addition to his volunteer service with the Midway, he has also served as a docent for the Star of India and other ships. He even helped with the building of a full-size replica of the San Salvadore – Juan Cabrillos’ ship! Ed has also worked for the San Diego County Registrar of Voters as a Lead Trainer for the past nine years.

Ed’s favorite part of volunteering aboard the Midway is working with the early morning and weekend volunteers. He explains, “I get to meet young sailors and Marines and to have the opportunity to interact with them and hear how they see the military and their futures...not to mention the ability to re-live a small part of my military days, vicariously, through them.” Ed’s dedication to the Midway and to the San Diego community is inspiring. Thank you, Ed, for all that you do!

SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY FINDS CREATIVE WAYS TO KEEP VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED



San Pasqual Academy is a unique campus with a residential school for foster teens. Volunteer “grandparents” live in houses on campus and serve as mentors for the youth. With graduation being canceled at San Pasqual Academy due to the Covid pandemic, the grandparent volunteers participated in a parade of cars as part of a Friday Night Lights event at the football field for the graduates. The fire department led the grandparent auto parade, hosted in part by the Department of Education, with the graduating seniors standing in center field. School and County representatives also attended the celebration. There was a helicopter flyover to make some noise for the graduating class, and the scoreboard was set to “2020.” One particularly unique float of a dragon was recognized as “best decorated.” It circled the field delivering messages. In addition, Dragon Grandpa Lauren decorated his golf cart with balloons to provide to each graduating senior. This intergenerational event was good for the morale of all of the students, staff, and grandparents involved. Congrats to the class of 2020!

The grandparents have continued to be involved in other ways during this time to help keep students from feeling isolated. Some are baking and delivering treats to the youth, while others are providing cultural information and art kits for the youth houses. Grandparents are also checking in on each other weekly to ensure safety and avoid isolation. Program Coordinator Michelle North and other alumna are also calling grandparents regularly, providing them with positive thoughts and useful resources. It is wonderful that members of the San Pasqual community are looking after one another during these times.



CELEBRATING A DECADE

The year 2020 marks the 10th Anniversary of the *Live Well San Diego* vision. Initiated with the approval of the vision on July 13, 2010 by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, *Live Well San Diego* aligns the efforts of government, community partners, and individuals to help all residents be healthy, safe, and thriving. The vision has grown into a collective impact movement that is creating a better quality of life for all San Diegans.

Visit www.livewellsd.org to learn more about the vision and how to become involved. Be sure to check out the **2020 *Live Well San Diego 10-Year Impact Report*** to see how much progress we have made together as a region since 2010. Individuals can take part in the *Live Well San Diego* vision by making positive choices, participating in Recognized Partner programs and *Live Well San Diego* Signature Events, and contributing in unique ways to improve the quality of life for themselves and those around them. Organizations that wish to formally join these efforts may apply to become a *Live Well San Diego* Recognized Partner at the website.

THANK YOU TO AIS-SPONSORED LIVE WELL SAN DIEGO RECOGNIZED PARTNERS

We'd like to thank all of the AIS-sponsored *Live Well San Diego* Recognized Partners for their dedication to the *Live Well San Diego* vision and their contributions to older adults, caregivers, and those living with disabilities:

- 101 Mobility
- A Caring Heart Homecare
- A Place for Mom
- Alzheimer's Association
- Alzheimer's San Diego
- Arthritis Foundation
- At Your Home Familycare
- Bayside Community Services
- Blind Community Center of San Diego
- Braille Institute
- Caregiver Coalition of San Diego
- Chula Vista Walks
- Coast Care Partners
- Consumer Advocates for RCFE Reform (CARR)
- Del Mar Community Connections
- ElderHelp
- Foundation for Senior Wellbeing
- Gary & Mary West Foundation
- George G. Glenner Alzheimer's Family Centers
- Homewatch Caregivers
- Household Guardians
- IHSS Public Authority
- IKOR Life Care Management
- Jewish Family Service
- Jimbo's ... Naturally!
- Kimberly Bell, DPT
- Meals on Wheels San Diego County
- Music Works
- Partnerships With Industry
- Resounding Joy
- St. Paul's Senior Services
- San Diego County Coalition for Improving End-of Life Care
- San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E)
- San Diego Oasis
- San Diego Senior Games Association
- Serving Seniors
- Skinny Gene Project
- Smart House
- Southern Caregiver Resource Center

WE CAN DO MORE TOGETHER THAN WE COULD EVER DO ALONE!

COVID-19 VACCINE INFORMATION

The County has begun receiving shipments of the COVID-19 vaccine. Developed by Pfizer, the vaccine recently received emergency use authorization. The distribution of the vaccine will be done in phases as supply is currently very limited. Critical care health workers, followed by long-term care facility residents and employees, will be among the first to receive the vaccine (Phase 1A). In the second phase, or Phase 1B, essential workers will be vaccinated. After that, adults with underlying medical conditions and people over the age of 65 will be able to receive the vaccine (Phase 1C). For more details on the COVID-19 vaccine distribution, visit www.coronavirus-sd.org.

DREAM BIG AND STRIVE FOR HEALTH IN 2021

It's the start of a new year so why not dream big? Grab some paper and a pencil and find a quiet place to sit and close your eyes. Imagine one year has passed and you are now living a healthier life. You're not sure how it happened, but you did it and you're loving it! How is this ideal life different from your life now? Where are you and what are you doing? Who are you with? Jot down words or pictures that come to mind!

Once you've dreamed big, you can then start small. Think of one goal for just this week, but make sure your goal is SMART!*

- **Specific**-Be clear and focused, avoiding vague words like "more," "less," or "healthier."
- **Measurable**-Know when you've achieved your goal: How many, how often, etc.?
- **Action Based**-Use action verbs to describe your goals. What is the thing that is in your control that you will do?
- **Realistic**- Start small and see your confidence increase as you reach your goal. For example, if you have not been exercising at all, having a goal of jogging every day for 30 minutes may be too ambitious.
- **Time Bound**- When will you start and finish this goal? You may start your goal by stating, "For 1 week, I will..." Starting out with a short time span like 1 week will increase your likelihood of success!

Make sure to write down your SMART goal, as well as your daily or weekly progress. An example of an exercise goal might be: "I will walk for at least 15 minutes in the morning for at least 4 days this week." Or, you might select a nutrition goal such as: "I will eat a piece of fruit with my breakfast every day this week."

If you reach your goal the first week, consider increasing the challenge, but do so little by little. With time and increased confidence, your goals can turn into lifelong positive changes. If you don't meet your goal the first week, don't worry! Think about what made it challenging and consider creating a more attainable goal. Set backs are normal, but don't use them as an excuse to give up. Instead, recommit to your goal. You've got this! And when people start noticing and admiring your new habits, you can tell them that your decision to make 2021 your year is how it all began!

**This activity was adapted from Leah's Pantry Food Smarts curriculum.*

GET YOUR FLU SHOT

Influenza ("the flu") is a contagious illness that can be severe and life-threatening, especially for older adults. The flu can make existing health problems worse and is particularly dangerous for people with chronic health conditions, like heart disease and diabetes. The best way to prevent catching the flu is to get the flu vaccine every year. Last flu season in San Diego County, 108 people died from the flu. Getting a flu shot is especially important this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those who get a flu shot are helping to preserve health care resources and keep hospital capacity free to serve those who contract COVID-19. The vaccine is now available at many retail pharmacies and physician offices. To find a site for a flu shot, call 2-1-1 or visit www.sdiz.org.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Please note: Due to the pandemic, all classes and events listed below are online. To ensure a timely and relevant calendar, the online and printed versions of this calendar may vary.

JANUARY 4, MONDAY 9 A.M.

Join San Diego Oasis for a free, online ***Fitness Palooza***. This virtual event features brief, 10-minute sessions of a variety of fitness classes, including Line Dancing for Beginners, Bone-Building Fitness, Progressive Strength, Balance, & Flexibility, and Tai Chi Chuan: Beginners. Watch at your convenience starting at 9 a.m. at the Oasis YouTube Channel at www.youtube.com/user/SanDiegoOasis. A second day of this virtual event will be held on Wednesday, January 6 starting at 9 a.m. No registration required. For questions, email info@SanDiegoOasis.org or call (619) 881-6262.

JANUARY 6, WEDNESDAY 10-11:30 A.M.

Healthy Living for Your Brain and Body and a Happy New YOU! In this free, online class you will learn about research in the areas of diet and nutrition, exercise, cognitive activity and social engagement, and use hands-on tools to help you incorporate recommendations into a plan for healthy aging. Additionally, you can jumpstart the New Year with new healthy lifestyle changes. Kat Burris, RD will present small changes that can lead to a sustainable positive impact on your health and well being. To register, call (800) 272-3900 or visit www.alz.org/sandiego/events and click on "Educational Programs."

JANUARY 25, MONDAY 10-11 A.M.

An online class, ***Watercolor Hangout with Eddie Omens*** (course #102), will be hosted by Oasis. Hangout, relax and enjoy an hour of watercolor with artist Eddie Omens. Using watercolor and ink techniques, Eddie will explain his process while creating a stunning work of art. You're welcome to simply watch and relax or paint along with the lesson. For those painting along, you'll need a small selection of basic brushes, watercolors, a pen, and watercolor paper. Laugh, learn, relax and have a great time! Cost: \$8. To register, visit www.SanDiegoOasis.org or call (619) 881-6262 to register.

JANUARY 28, THURSDAY 10:30 A.M.-12 P.M.

Join the Alzheimer's Association for a free, online class: ***Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia and Knowing Your Facility Care Options***. Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging. Learn about the impact of Alzheimer's, the difference between Alzheimer's and dementia, stages and risk factors, current research and treatments available for some symptoms, and Alzheimer's Association resources. Additionally, you will learn about facility care options. To register, call (800) 272-3900 or visit www.alz.org/sandiego/events and click on "Educational Programs."

JANUARY 29, FRIDAY 11 A.M.-12 P.M.

An online class, ***What is a Fair Society?*** (course #253), will be hosted by San Diego Oasis. What

do governments owe their citizens? What do we owe our government? What is the proper role of the state in providing for the needs and well being of its citizens? In this thoughtful examination of societal and governmental obligation, Dr. Matthew Wion will present a number of philosophical arguments to help illuminate what a fair society might look like. Cost: \$10. To register, visit www.SanDiegoOasis.org or call (619) 881-6262 to register.

FEBRUARY 4, THURSDAY 1:45-2:45 P.M.

A ***Zoom Adult Writer's Group*** will be offered by the Balboa Library. Join this group for guidance on applying elements of writing to help you along through the different phases of your own creative projects. To register or learn more, email Eduardo Chavez at BAstaff@sandiego.gov.

FEBRUARY 5, FRIDAY 1-2:30 P.M.

A free, online class, ***Legal & Financial Basics***, will be hosted by Alzheimer's San Diego. Learn from local estate planning attorney and elder law expert Yvonne Amrine about getting key legal documents in place, and how to plan for the costs of future care needs. To register, visit www.alzsd.org and click on "Help & Support," or call (858) 492-4400.

SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

We welcome your contributions to this monthly calendar. Just send items by the 1st of each month preceding the issue date to sarah.jackson@sdcounty.ca.gov.



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When You Don't Know Where To Turn Turn To Us!



Whether the need is for assessment, service referrals, or follow-up, with just one phone call, you or a loved one can receive help for:

- Seniors
- Disabled adults
- Abused adults
- Those requiring home-based care to prevent institutionalization

As a public agency, we provide comprehensive information and impartial assistance free of charge to county residents. Since 1974, people have been turning to us at Aging & Independence Services. You can too.



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www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov



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