

RESOURCEFUL THINKING FOR CHANGING TIMES

An E-Brief

Ann Koegler, Altenheim Resource Services

September 14, 2020

This E-Brief will offer a little different format for our readers.

AARP: Six Things to Help Through Flu Season

“Regular” flu season usually starts in October and peaks between December and February.

- Talk to your primary care provider about your annual flu shot and get vaccinated. If you’re over 65, ask about the high dose vaccine.

Follow these guidelines:

1. Wash your hands. Try to wash or sanitize your hands every hour when out in public.
2. Carry your own pen so you can avoid the communal pen at the grocery store or restaurant.
3. Get enough sleep. Research shows that those who sleep less than 5 hours on average are 4.5 times more likely to become infected than those who slept more than 7 hours.
4. Walk instead of drive.
5. Stop smoking. Don’t vape.
6. Try to avoid shared food. (You probably want to avoid buffets!)

[Source: AARP Bulletin, September 2020, “Six Things You Should Never Do Again”]

Scams

Beware of the grandparent scam. Scammers call potential victims claiming to be a grandchild who has gotten into some kind of difficulty and needs help – usually financial.

- Have a code word to use with your grandchildren. If the caller doesn’t know the code, it probably isn’t your family.
- Before you do anything, CALL your grandchild or their parents and check on them. Do NOT fall prey to the scammer’s demands for an immediate response.
- Report scam attempts to the police, the Attorney General, the FBI and/or the FTC.

[Ann serves on the Northern Panhandle Elder Abuse Council to help prevent and educate others about elder abuse.]

Virtual Meetings (aka Zoom Meetings)

Have you been doing Zoom meetings (or any of the other virtual meetings - Cisco, GotoMeeting, Skype, Microsoft Teams, etc) to the point that your eyes are starting to cross? You are not alone! Zoom saw an increase from 10 million users pre-pandemic to about 300 million in the 2nd quarter of 2020. Meetings, trainings, and family and friend gatherings are all part of our new Zoom life.

While researching this segment, I found a great beginning to an article on PennLive.com (see Source for entire credit):

“There was a time when those of us who worked in offices thought that the coronavirus pandemic would finally mean an end to office meetings. Oh, what fools we were. What sweet summer children.” I cannot tell you the people who have shared that same sentiment in a variety of ways!! (Reminds me of my last job where one staff meeting could last for a day. Literally. Thank you, current job, for restoring my sanity!)

[Source: PennLive, “Zoom meeting etiquette: 15 tips and best practices for online video conference meetings”, Posted April 20, 2020 and Updated April 22, 2020, www.penlive.com]

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Zoom Adapting

But – technology is with us and has been for over 20 years. We are facing an unprecedented time and our adapting, and continuing to be productive, relevant and beneficial depends on our embracing technology and rethinking how we do business. Not an easy task for some of us!

That same technology will present not only business challenges but personal ones as well. Here are some things to consider as we Zoom (meet virtually) through the pandemic.

Zoom Fatigue

That tired, bleary-eyed, mentally dull feeling we have after numerous virtual meetings. Here are some tips to help you adapt to the new way of gathering.

- Get up between meetings and stretch. If you are on a long meeting, get up and stretch during.
- Look away from the screen to give your eyes a break. Remember to blink.
- Try not to have back-to-back-to-back Zoom meetings.
- Avoid multi-tasking. Close any tabs or programs that may distract you. Put your phone away. Stay focused on the ‘moment’.
- Think about onscreen stimuli. You may want to turn off your video. Encourage participants to use a plain background. (Do you try to read the book titles on shelves?)
- Although in person video is recommended by the pros, you may want to avoid using video if you are totally burned out. Take a short respite and consider participating via Zoom call.
- Think about using phone or email contact if the goals can be accomplished without a Zoom call.

[Source: Harvard Business Review, “How to Combat Zoom Fatigue”, Liz Fosslien & Mollie West Duffy, April 29, 2020, www.hbr.org]

Zoom Etiquette

While we are in our virtual meetings, there are certain basic courtesies that we can observe.

- Don’t be late. Rule of thumb for hosts, per the Wall Street Journal: There’s no need to recap for someone who is late.
- Avoid using avatars or stock photos. Show up in person.
- Sit still. Don’t pace, don’t walk around the house, and don’t go to the bathroom (yes, it has been done per reports). If you need to move, turn off the video.
- Don’t eat. For two reasons: the sound of chewing is not good, and it really looks bad. If you are going to eat, mute yourself and consider turning off the video.
- Interrupting takes on a new meaning with Zoom but do it politely. Try “raising your hand”, taking yourself off mute (the sign that an attendee may have something to say), or asking something in “chat”. Hopefully, a moderator will be a gatekeeper and call attention to attendees who want to talk.
- Close the office door
- If at home, find a private setting. Try to arrange for family and pets to be “somewhere else”.
- Turn off the phone.

[Source: The Wall Street Journal, “Seven Rules of Zoom Meeting Etiquette From the Pros”, Betsy Morris, July 2020, www.wsj.com]

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Zoom-Miscellaneous

There are some additional things to consider as you go about your Zooming, especially when your video is on.

- Dress for the occasion. Wear pants
- Don't get a shower, file your nails, or do other personal care.
- Check your teeth.
- Pay attention to what – or who – is in your background.
- Be aware of where your camera is and what is in view
- Watch lighting. Avoid sitting with your back to the window.

Disposable Masks & Reusable Masks

For many of us, masks have become a part of everyday life. Please keep these things in mind.

- Remove the mask by the straps, not by the front of the mask.
- Before disposing of mask, remove the ear straps so animals will not get entangled in them.
- For disposable masks: Dispose of masks properly, preferably placing them in a plastic bag (like a grocery bag or zip lock bag), securing the bag tightly, and disposing of it in the garbage. Please make sure to throw your mask in the garbage!!
- Wash hands immediately after disposing of your mask or clean your hands with hand sanitizer.
- For reusable masks, wash them after each use. You can put them in the washing machine. Make sure to remove any additional filters such as coffee filters or paper towels. Dry on high heat.
- You can hand wash your reusable mask.
 - Wash in hot water
 - Use a bleach solution and soak mask for 5 minutes
 - Rinse thoroughly in cool or room temp water
 - Dry completely (air dry or dryer)

[Source: www.mountainside-medical.com, "How to Properly Dispose of a Face Mask"; www.who.int, "Advice on the use of masks", www.cdc.gov; www.theconversation.com, "Single-use masks could be a coronavirus hazard if we don't dispose of them properly", Saniyat Islam, Kate Kennedy, July 21, 2020.]

Annual Open Enrollment for Medicare Advantage and Prescription Drug Coverage

- Runs from October 15 – December 7
- Do you need to make changes in your Part D provider?
 - Review your Annual Notice of Coverage from your existing Part D provider
 - Go to Medicare.gov and do a comparison to see if there is a better provider for you
 - <https://www.medicare.gov/plan-compare/#/?lang=en&year=2020>
 - Information on 2021 plans will be available in October
- You can make changes in Original Medicare to Medicare Advantage or Medicare Advantage back to Original Medicare
- Change your Part D Prescription Drug Plan
- Help is available from your local SHIP counselor, a free health insurance information program. You can find your local SHIP counselor at:
<https://www.medicare.gov/Contacts/#resources/ships>

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Voting by Mail? Checklist from the Postal Service

- Start today. Give yourself and your election officials time to complete the process.
- Contact your Election Board to confirm rules and dates. Find links at usps.com/votinginfo
- Request your ballot at least 15 days before Election Day, preferably sooner.
- When you get the ballot, follow the instructions. Add postage to the return envelope, if needed.
- The USPS recommends you mail your ballot AT LEAST 7 days before Election Day.

Early voting is an option for many. Check with your Election Board for any new rules that have been implemented due to COVID.

[Source: USPS, Postal Customer mailing, 09/20]

Voting Information

You can get information on your candidate choices at www.ballotready.org. You can browse by state. Learn about the candidates. Learn about the issues. Vote!

Utility Shut Off Moratorium

Where does your state stand in regard to utility shut offs due to COVID-19? Check out the National Energy Directors' Association (NEADA) website to see what your state's policy is. Go to <https://neada.org/utilityshutoffsuspensions/> to see the Summary of State Utility Shut-Off Moratoriums due to COVID-19.

Supportive Services

There are many services available for older adults, care receivers, and caregivers.

- ✓ Home care can offer non-medical assistance with supervision, light housekeeping, and personal care.
- ✓ Home delivered meals can help main nutrition.
- ✓ Support groups are available for a variety of concerns.
- ✓ Medicare information is available through State Health Insurance Information counselors.

Need to know what is available? Give us a call!

Altenheim Resource Services

Do you need information on aging issues such as dementia or on resources for supportive services? Give us a call! We continue to work from home but you can reach Ann at 304 280-8701 (please leave a message), through email (akoegler1995@gmail.com) or through our website (www.altenheimcommunity.com). Free and confidential.

Altenheim Retirement Community

We have 8 cottages for independent adults 65 and over. We continue to accept applications for residency. For more information or to request an application, contact Executive Director George Dakovic at 304 242-3340.

Altenheim Resource Services offers a monthly newsletter "Resourceful Thinking" that is emailed and is also downloaded to the Altenheim webpage. Check it out at www.altenheimcommunity.com.