

Hello All,

It is nearly impossible to describe these times, isn't it? Dr. Shah, Maine's CDC Director, has used "unsettling, disorienting, difficult." We are in the midst of one of the greatest public health crises the world has seen in more than a century; knowing that we are living through a once-in-a-lifetime event is, among other things, humbling.

I know I've said it before, but it's worth saying over and over: Thank you for your resiliency during this extraordinary circumstance. DAFS is the backbone of state government, and you all are proving to be as strong and creative as ever.

We are being challenged. It's okay if staying home or physically distancing yourself from the people and places you used to visit is taking a toll. It's a strange situation that we've never had to experience before. To continue to quote Dr. Shah, "It's okay not to be okay." But we must remember that we have choices that can change the way we are dealing with and experiencing this abrupt turn of events. Below we offer some ways to maintain your mental and physical health during this time of physical distancing.

- **Occupy your time at home outside work hours with stimulating activities!**

Rediscover or start a hobby, like playing an instrument, creating art or reading. Get out the Monopoly game, learn a new card game, put a puzzle together. As we get into warmer weather, get outside for activities like gardening or an outdoor home improvement project. Our Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has great outside options on their [website](#). It's critical that you do not get into a "work, veg, sleep, repeat" routine.

- **Take a break from the news!**

I can't recommend this enough. We are exposed to news constantly through every device at all hours of the day. Understandably, hearing about the pandemic all the time can be upsetting. Turn off the TV, walk away from your phone, and just... take a break. Recognize that there are things you can and can't control.

- **Learn an in-home workout!**

We can stay active in different ways. From doing a regimen of push-ups, sit-ups, and squats in your yard or in your living room, to using canned food as

weights, to jumping rope, walking around the yard, or walking up and down your stairs. Combine this with a Facetime chat with a friend to have an exercise buddy. You could also try yoga, which allows for both a good workout and a chance to focus your mind on other things. YouTube and Facebook can be great sources of free workouts. Remember – if you are working at home, it’s important to get up and move every hour, just like in the office!

- **Maintain distance; Stay in touch!**

Don’t let physical distancing mean social isolation. Stay connected with family and friends via phone, computer, or even by writing a letter. Consider volunteering through local organizations or through the United Way’s [COVID-19 Response effort](#). These organizations are rethinking how they normally use volunteers (for instance, reading to the elderly over Facetime!), and helping others is fulfilling and uplifting.

- **Indulge in the little things!**

Sometimes it’s the little things in life that bring us the most joy, and now is the time for bursts of joy. Want to have a piece of cake for lunch? I promise, I won’t tell anyone. Sing out loud with your favorite album. Enjoy a bath in the evening. Find something that brings you happiness and take comfort in that warm, familiar feeling.

- **Remember that things will get better.**

As DAFS Commissioner, I’ve been a part of Governor Mills’ Coronavirus Response Team since its formation, and I am in awe of the smart, dedicated people working tirelessly to make this situation better. From proactive measures designed to stop the spread of the virus, to successful requests for government aid, to practical steps to help Maine’s economy through this, rest assured that we are using everything at our disposal to get through this.

Of course, things will also get better because of *you*. Continue to practice the CDC recommendations for proper hygiene and physical distancing to flatten the curve of this virus! Stay kind; assume best intentions; give each other a break.