

# Montana Kinship Navigator Program

## Thoughts from the Home Office

By Heidi Lester, M.Ed., Program Manager MTKNP

*Greetings Kinship Friends and Families,*

*What a wild and unique time for all of us! While I absolutely agree with our nation's steps to help keep us all healthy and safe, I sure do miss meeting with people face to face! Even as we move through our 're-opening' phases, we will still take necessary precautions to reduce the spread of this (and any) virus. Please note, our office is checking voicemail and have access to email should anyone have a specific need or is looking for additional resources.*

*These times can be challenging at best, and you might be scared, or full of doubt and angst – AND you can still move forward 😊.*

*Be sure to explore the resources, and links to resources, highlighted in this newsletter ~ then take a peek at our new and improved LIVE website:*

*<https://www.msuextension.org/mtknp/index.html>*

*I'd like to take a second and give a big "Thank You" to both Dr. Brianna Routh and Dr. Alison Brennan for their contributions to this newsletter; sometimes it takes a village for us ALL.*

*Keep your chin up!*

*Heidi Lester, Program Manager  
MTKNP*



**~For more information about the Montana Kinship Navigator program in your area, answers to your questions, support, resources, local support groups, and any other help please contact your county support person listed inside. If your county is not listed, please contact The Montana Kinship Navigator Program at 406-994-3395 or [mtknp@montana.edu](mailto:mtknp@montana.edu).~**

## Mental Health Moment: Finding the Calm in the Storm



~ Dr. Alison Brennan, PhD. MSU Extension, HHD

No doubt about it: the COVID-19 pandemic has been stressful! For families with children, the added pressures of shifting to online learning, plus changes in social activities and routines, are likely to have created some turbulence at home. Caregivers and children alike may be more irritable or moody, have short tempers, or have difficulty coping. Stress reactions like these are part of being human. However, you are not powerless in these situations. There are actions you can take to feel better and experience more positive family interactions. The goal of this brief piece is to give you some timely tips to help you manage stress during these challenging times.

### 1. Back to the Basics

When daily life has drastically changed, it can be challenging to ensure we are meeting our basic physical needs. How has your sleep been lately? What about any children in your household—what have their sleeping patterns been like? Sleep is vital for managing our moods and reactions. Do you know how much sleep you and any children in your home should be getting? Look at these [guidelines from the CDC](#) to find out if you should consider making some changes to sleeping practices.

Some other important aspects of daily life that can affect your mood and ability to cope are nutrition and physical activity. You might notice that you or children in your home tend to get “hangry” (angry when hungry). A balanced diet with plenty of protein in meals and snacks—do not forget about snacks—can help keep your mood and stress more manageable. Be sure you and the children in your home are getting enough exercise, too. To view the physical activity guidelines for Americans, click [here](#).

### 2. Mind Your Media

With schools moving to online classes during the pandemic, screen time is unavoidable. Be aware of how much screen time children have each day and encourage children to “unplug” by reading a book, playing a board game or spending time outdoors. Too much screen time, particularly in the evening, can affect sleep quality.

It is also important to pay attention to the types of media you and children in your home are consuming. Try to consume news reported in a neutral rather than sensationalized manner. Another useful strategy is to take breaks from social media or news media if either of these is negatively impacting your mood or thoughts.

### 3. Lean on Each Other

Spend time connecting as a family. Connection time can go a long way in supporting feelings of safety and security.

Family time can create opportunities for children to express themselves and for adults to provide reassurance and support. In addition to family time, one-on-one time with each child, doing an activity of their choosing, is a powerful way of communicating that a child is important and loved.

If misbehavior has been a problem, addressing children’s needs through the strategies described above can help reduce problem behavior. For more information on coping, managing misbehavior, and creating harmony at home during COVID-19, see the World Health Organization’s webpage, [Parenting in the Time of COVID-19](#), or the NDSU Extension publication, [Talking to Children About Pandemics](#).

***Do you have children at home? Click the links below for suggestions from the experts at the Child Mind Institute and Child Trends in helping children navigate their emotions during this pandemic:***

<https://childmind.org/article/supporting-kids-during-the-covid-19-crisis/>

<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/resources-for-supporting-childrens-emotional-well-being-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

## Food and Nutrition:

### Food Safety in the Time of COVID-19

Contribution by Dr. Brianna Routh, PhD, MSU Extension HHD

In a time of uncertainty, we want to keep our families healthy while still meeting our food needs! Here are a few things you can do to limit risk for you, your family, and your community when getting food:

- 1 **HANDS** Wash them often
- 2 **ELBOW** Cough into it
- 3 **FACE** Wear a facemask when going out and Don't touch it
- 4 **SPACE** Keep safe distance from other people (6 feet is recommended)
- 5 **HOME** Stay home if you can!

Researchers have **NOT** found that the virus causing COVID-19 can live on food or food packages. When getting food:

- 1) If you are high risk (over 60 years old or compromised immune system), ask a friend, neighbor, family member or grocery delivery service to assist you with grocery shopping.
- 2) If you must go, follow the above steps, including wearing a facemask, keeping your distance from other shoppers or workers, avoiding touching your face, and make a grocery list including less perishable food options so you can shop less often.
- 3) You can take additional precautions of wearing gloves and washing your clothes when you return home but be sure to carefully remove these items and facemasks. It is important to wash your hands as described above before touching your face!
- 4) Use regular food safety procedures when handling and eating foods. **Wash** hands and kitchen surfaces regularly, **separate** raw meat from other foods, **cook** to the right temperature, and **refrigerate** foods promptly. Note, research does not currently suggest any benefit to sanitizing food packages and do NOT clean fresh produce with anything other than water.
- 5) Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and children who participate in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, should continue to have access to food benefits even if programs may look different for a while.

Images used with permission from The World Health Organization:  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

**Did you know  
that soap breaks  
down the  
protective  
envelope around  
this virus?**

Proper hand washing means any virus on your hands goes harmlessly right down the drain! Remember:

- 1) **RINSE** *your hands (warm or cold water will work)*
- 2) **LATHER AND SCRUB** *your hands for 20 seconds away from water, then*
- 3) **RINSE** *the soap off your hands. When water isn't available, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be used.*



## Montana Kinship Family Support Contacts By County

You can find many more parenting resources and Montguides on our website: <https://www.msueextension.org/mtknp/index.html>

**Blaine County**—Harlem & Fort Belknap Indian Reservation  
Hillary Maxwell, MSU Extension, *currently running a support group*  
(406) 353-2656

**Big Horn County**—Hardin  
Holly Jay, MSU Extension  
(406) 665-9770

**Cascade County**—Great Falls  
Katrin Finch, MSU Extension, *currently running a support group*  
(406) 454-6980

Tammy Phelps  
Family Connections  
(406) 761-6010

**Chouteau County**—Fort Benton  
Janell Barber, MSU Extension  
(406) 622-3036

**Deer Lodge County**—Anaconda  
Kimberly Richardson, MSU Extension, *currently running a support group*  
(406) 563-4035

**Fergus County**—Lewistown  
Denise Seilstad, MSU Extension  
(406) 535-3919

**Flathead County**—Kalispell  
Grandfamilies of Montana, Inc. *~currently running a support group*  
(406) 309-0816

**Gallatin County**—Bozeman  
Heidi Lester, MSU Extension, *currently running a support group*  
(406) 994-3395  
mtknp@montana.edu

**Glacier County**—Browning & Blackfeet Indian Reservation  
Carrie Bear Chief-Evans, Eagle Shield Center, *currently running a support group*  
(406) 338-7257

**Hill County**—Havre  
Jasmine Carbajal, MSU Extension,  
(406) 265-5481  
*Currently co-running a support group with HRDC*  
Colleen White Wolf, HRDC (406) 265-6743

**Hill County**—Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation  
Mary Ruth St. Pierre, Stone Child College & MSU Extension, *currently running a support group*  
(406) 395-4875

**Lincoln County** – Troy  
Jennifer Higgins, Troy Public Schools, *currently running a support group ~ 406-295-4321 ext. 1126*

**Mineral County**—Alberton  
AnnaMarie White, Owner, White Horse Forestry, INC, GAL, ICWA, QEW, La Paloma Agency, *currently running a support group*  
(406) 396-1937

**Missoula County**—Missoula  
Kelly Moore, MSU Extension, *currently running a support group*  
(406) 258-4206  
Alicia Crandall, Missoula Aging Services  
(406) 728-7682

**Pondera County**—Conrad  
Wendy Wedum, MSU Extension  
(406) 271-4052

**Richland County**—Sidney  
Carrie Krug, MSU Extension  
(406) 433-1206

**Roosevelt County**—Culbertson  
Ardis Oelkers, MSU Extension  
(406) 787-5312

**Roosevelt County**—Fort Peck Indian Reservation  
Carol Bemer, Fort Peck Tribe Tribal Elderly Program  
(406) 768-2434

**Rosebud County**—Forsyth  
Jennifer Anderson, MSU Extension  
(406) 346-7320

**Rosebud County**—Lame Deer & Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation  
Kay Medicine Bull, Boys & Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne Nation  
(406) 477-6654

**Sanders County**—Thompson Falls  
Juli Thurston, MSU Extension  
(406) 827-6934

**Silver Bow County**—Butte  
Tonya Crooker, Butte 4-C's, *currently running a support group*  
(406) 723-4019

**Teton County**—Choteau  
Jane Wolery, MSU Extension  
(406) 466-2492

**Valley County**—Glasgow  
Roubie Younkin, MSU Extension  
(406) 228-6241

**Yellowstone County**—Billings  
Jackie Rumph, MSU Extension, *currently running a support group*  
(406) 256-2828

We are looking to expand our support groups across the state – if you, or anyone you know, are interested in starting or reviving a Kinship Caregiver Support Group, please contact us for more information:  
Heidi Lester, Program Manager  
406-994-3395  
Heidi.lester@montana.edu



MSU Extension Human Health and Development  
102 Taylor Hall  
PO 173540  
Bozeman MT 59717-3540

Non-profit  
Organization  
US Postage Paid  
Permit 69  
Bozeman, MT 59715

MSU Extension Human Health and Development  
102 Taylor Hall  
PO 173540  
Bozeman MT 59717-3540  
(406) 994-3395  
(833) 445-3395  
[mtknp@montana.edu](mailto:mtknp@montana.edu)  
<https://www.msuextension.org/mtknp/index.html>



## Montana Kinship Navigator Program

**“Call it a clan, call it a network,  
call it a tribe, call it a family.  
Whatever you are, whoever you are.  
You need one.”**