

# PROJECT SUN

Helping children flourish

## Stress Management and Self-Care



*Guest Speaker:*

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In this rapidly changing world, stress levels are at record-breaking highs, and none of us are exempt from its negative effects. Stress has the capacity to take a tremendous toll on both our mind and our body.

There is no better time than the present to put stress management and self-care at the top of our priority list. Taking care of yourself will help maintain your physical, emotional, and mental reserves to prevent and manage stress more effectively.

Making a commitment to engaging in stress management and self-care does not need to be a difficult undertaking. This fairly simple, three-step approach will have you feeling better in little to no time at all:

- 1) Increase your awareness of the need for stress management and self-care;
- 2) Change the way that you think, feel, and act as it relates to life's stressors; and
- 3) Create new strategies for managing stress and for engaging in self-care.

  
**Self-care**  
*- isn't -*  
**Selfish**

During the August Parent Café presentation, **"Self Care Tips for Parents and Caregivers"** participants will learn how to better understand stress, gain strategies to manage stress more effectively, and develop an individualized self-care regimen. This event will be held via webinar on **August 20th from 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM**. For registration information, visit the Project SUN Facebook page or [CLICK HERE](#).

### Self-Care Resources

- [Self-Care Assessment Worksheet](#) - An easy assessment and Self-Care Plan template to enhance your self-care.
- [Checklists and Measures to Assess Your Self-Care](#) - Free, online tools that can help assess your mental health, including personal stress levels, burnout risk, personality inventories, and more.
- [Developing Your Support System](#) - Tips for building and growing relationships that enrich your well-being.

## Project SUN Initiates Conversations to Address Systemic Racism

Prior to the recent attention raised by the Black Lives Matter movement about systemic racism after the murder of George Floyd and others, Project SUN had planned to host a conversation with young adults to discuss what can be done to address the racial disparity in access to mental, emotional, and behavioral health services. However, after Mr. Floyd's death and the increased national awareness around the presence of systemic racism in our country, this idea blossomed into two events.



*Facilitators for Project SUN's "Let's Talk - Addressing Systemic Racism, Pursuing Racial Justice" event for young adults.*

A Community Conversation aimed at the public at large was hosted on July 28 and attended by **39 individuals**. The second was hosted for youth ages 16-21 on August 5. **Ten young adults** participated in the event to learn and share their experiences. *(Continued on next page)*



# Helpful Resources

We challenge you to read at least one of these resources!

Visit [projectsunkankakee.wordpress.com/](https://projectsunkankakee.wordpress.com/) to comment and share your thoughts or questions. Pass along what you find helpful to a friend or family member!

## **FRIENDLY READ - Less Than 5 Minutes**

- [How to Help Someone with Anxiety or Depression During COVID-19](#) - Five steps from Mental Health First Aid that can help you better support a friend, relative, or co-worker that may be struggling with anxiety or depression.

## **REFLECTIVE READ - More than 5 Minutes**

- [Racial Inequities/Disparities Facts](#) - Presented during Project SUN's "Addressing Systemic Racism" conversations, these points can be used to reflect on benefits or barriers you may have experienced due to your race or ethnicity.
- [School Decision-Making Tool for Parents](#) - CDC recommendations for transitioning back to school mid-COVID-19.

## **ACADEMIC READ - Longer than 10 Minutes**

- [Building Resilience in Foster Children](#) - How children in foster care can grow resilience in spite of traumatic stress.

## Project SUN Initiates Conversations to Address Systemic Racism (Continued)

Both conversations highlighted the history and modern-day impact of racism, followed by discussions that challenged participants to reflect on how race impacted their own life story. A panel of representatives from various organizations shared ways to get involved with local efforts to end racism. Connect Kankakee, City of Kankakee/Kankakee United, Kankakee School District's "STOP the Violence" project, the Kankakee County Hispanic Partnership, and the YWCA of Kankakee were discussed at the event on July 28. Black Lives Matter, Kankakee Anti-Racist Unity Movement (KARU), Connect Kankakee, Immigrant Justice, and the Momence Anti-Racist Coalition were discussed on August 5.

Participants' responses were very positive, and many attendees asked to be included in the follow-up conversations that Project SUN plans to have regarding specific steps to address local barriers faced by youth of color in accessing mental, emotional, and behavioral health services. If you would like to become a part of Project SUN's efforts to eliminate racial disparities in access to local mental health services, email [projectsun@cfkrv.org](mailto:projectsun@cfkrv.org).

## Answering Your Questions from "Recognizing the Needs of Siblings Living with a Child Who Has Behavioral Health Concerns"

Two of questions answered by Kankakee School District #111 School Social Worker, Debra Tamez, LCSW during July's Parent Café.

### **How can I help my child better communicate about their siblings' special needs, especially with their peers?**

It's often quite hard for siblings to articulate their feelings about their brother or sister's unique needs. They can vacillate between super protectiveness, anger, or shying away from conversations about their sibling with peers. Be sure to check in with siblings regularly and freely share your own feelings and reflections.

The Sibshop program can offer the siblings of children with special needs a place to find a community of others who understand their unique position. [Click here](#) for local and online Sibshop resources and registration information.

### **How can I help my children understand the behavior of their sibling with a behavioral health disorder who is acting out?**

Find children's books that address this subject! [Click here](#) for a list of reading recommendations. When reading the book try to make connections using statements like, "Do you think that might be how [brother or sister] is feeling right now?"

Help them connect with their own emotions. "When you get upset what do you do to calm down? Remember, your brother or sister has not learned this yet." Focus conversations on the idea of growth and development, not always blaming their condition.

## **September's Parent Café**

Project SUN's September Parent Café will return to its previous afternoon timeframe on **Thursday, September 17, from 5:00 - 6:30 PM**. Representatives from the Kankakee County Center Against Sexual Assault (KC-CASA) and Habor House will present, "**Having Tough Conversations with Your Child About Relationships.**"

**[CLICK HERE](#) to register by September 16.**

*Term of the Month:*

## **Toxic Stress**

"[An] experience that overwhelms us, sometimes making us feel like we are in serious danger. It can leave us feeling powerless and hopeless. And we may not have the coping skills or support we would need to fully deal with it. Although the impact of toxic stress can be chronic and impactful on adults, it is particularly detrimental for children." [If you believe you are experiencing toxic stress, please reach out to a mental health professional.](#)

*nam.org, 2017 - "What You Should Know About Toxic Stress"*