

# CONNECTIONS

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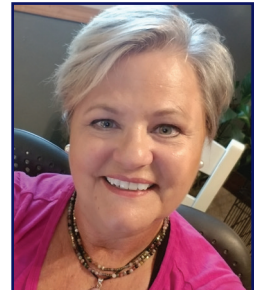
*Greetings City Employees,*

*The EAP Office would like to introduce our newest EAP Specialist, Mary Eldridge. We are so happy to have her on board! And while we're at it, we would like to take this opportunity to have you get to know all of us a little better so we have provided a short bio and photo for all EAP staff and hope that this will make it more comfortable for you to reach out to us when needed.*

### **Tresa Martinez, MSSW, CEAP (she/her/hers)**

Tresa has worked at the City of Madison since 2005 as the EAP Coordinator, now EAP Manager. Prior to her employment with the City she worked at the DOT as an EAP Specialist for 13 years. She has a Master's Degree in Organizational Social Work with Certificates in Corporate Consulting and Critical Incident Response in the field of Emergency Services. For fun, she likes to bike, read, work out, cook for and dine with family and friends and take walks with her German Shepherd Lulabelle. Tresa has two adult kids, Marissa and Riley.

*Supporting City employees to achieve healthy and fulfilling work/family lives has been the best career I could have ever hoped for!*



### **Arlyn Gonzalez, MSW, LCSW, CEAP (she/her/hers)**

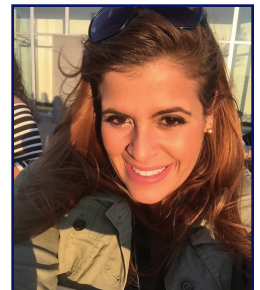
Arlyn has been working for the City of Madison's EAP since 2019. Arlyn has earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology & Social Work with a Criminal Justice Certificate and a Master's Degree in Social Work with an emphasis in Mental Health both from UW-Madison. Prior to joining the City, she was working as a therapist, crisis responder, and doing outreach/prevention work for different organizations including UW-Madison, UW-Health, and Meriter Hospital. She has dedicated her career to helping individuals who have experienced traumatic experience and/or complex mental health concerns. Arlyn was born in the Dominican Republic and raised in New York City. She is the proud mother of two boys who are 2 years old and 5 months. Arlyn is passionate about using her clinical experience and her unique perspective to advocate, improve, and support employee well-being. She has a strength-based and compassionate approach. Arlyn believes that every individual deserves to be in a healthy, supportive work environment where they can thrive and be their true self.

*Don't hesitate to reach out if I can be of any help!*



### **Mary Eldridge, MSW, LCSW, CA (she/ella)**

Mary is the newest member of the EAP team after having joined us in October 2021. Mary has a Master's in Social Work and brings expertise in areas like trauma treatment, violence prevention, anti-oppression work, and trainings and education due to her work at higher education institutions like UW-Madison and the University of Iowa. She is passionate about sustainability in the workplace like exploring ways in which employees' various needs can be met alongside organizational expectations including but not limited to safety, inclusion, equity, work-life balance, and sense of belonging as well as healthy relationships. Mary is also committed to offering services in both English and Spanish as requested.



### **Sherri Amos (she/her/hers)**

Sherri has worked as the EAP's Confidential Program Assistant since 2016 and is likely to be your first point of contact if you reach out to the EAP. In her role as office manager, Sherri supports EAP staff by scheduling counseling appointments, maintaining the EAP web site and utilization data, and coordinating the EAP newsletter and trainings. She also handles payroll, purchasing, contracts, hiring, and budget tasks for our small office. Her interests outside of work include cooking, knitting, reading, and generally trying to be a better human.



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## IT TAKES A VILLAGE

# Mindfulness for Children: Fun, Effective Ways to Strengthen Mind, Body, Spirit

By Karen Young, **Hey Sigmund** (Used with the author's permission)

Mindfulness has an extraordinary capacity to build a strong body, mind and spirit in ourselves as adults, as well as in our children. Science has told us that it can help to protect against stress, anxiety, depression, illness and pain, ease the symptoms of autism and ADHD, improve academic performance and social relationships, as well as expand the capacity to experience positive emotions.

Mindfulness is about stepping back and seeing thoughts and feelings come and go, without judgement, but with a relaxed mind, fully focused on the present moment.

Children are wonderfully present in what they do, but as life picks up speed, the capacity to experience that calm, strengthening stillness can become more difficult to access. The sooner we can encourage the little people in our lives towards mindfulness, the greater their capacity for mindful presence will be. A regular mindful practice will ensure that existing neural connections are strengthened and new ones established.

Mindfulness for children generally works best if it's kept to about five minutes or less. Of course, if they're able to go for longer, brilliant – go with that. Ready to play?

### 1. Mindful Breathing.

Get your kiddos into a comfy position and ask them to close their eyes. Next, ask how their breath feels as they draw it into themselves, and then as it leaves. If they put a hand on their belly, they'll be able to feel the rise and the fall of their breath. Do this about five times – five inhales, five exhales. After five breaths, guide them to any thoughts and feelings they might be aware of, then invite them to let go of those thoughts and feelings. Ask them to imagine that the thoughts and feelings are bubbles, floating away, as they return to their breathing. Repeat the five breaths – five in, five out – and do this as many times as feels right.

### 2. Thought Clouds.

This is a slightly different take on the above exercise. When your mindful ones are into the rhythm of breathing in through the nose for three, and out through the mouth for three, ask them to try this: 'As you breathe in, imagine that your thoughts are forming as little clouds above your head. Imagine the cloud floating away as you breathe out. Keep breathing slow, strong breaths and let your thoughts come, and then go.'

### Tips for Raising Resilient Kids

#### Tip #8 – Develop a Mindfulness Practice

Mindfulness is beneficial for us all! It can help us better cope with stress, tough emotions, and improve our impulse control. Teaching mindfulness to children is a tool that can help them throughout their lives.

### 3. The Mind(ful)-Body Connection.

The way we hold our bodies has a **powerful effect** on the way we feel and the way other people see us. Different poses can actually change body chemistry. Nurture the awareness of the mind-body connection in your children by asking them to explore how they feel when they strike a pose. Here are some good ones to try, particularly if they're about to do something that could make them a little anxious. In a quiet space where they feel safe and private, encourage them to strike one of these power poses and explore with them what they feel – hopefully more confident!

- *Superman*: Stand with feet just wider than hip width apart. Clench fists, stretch both arms out, and fully lengthen the body. Expanding physical presence by stretching and opening up can increase feelings of power and pride (think of athletes who cross the finish line first and throw their arms into the air).
- *Wonderwoman*: Stand up tall and strong with legs apart and hands on hips.

### 4. And while we're on superheroes ...

Ask them to switch on their super 'Spidey-senses' to find out what they can taste, smell, hear, see and feel in the moment.

### 5. The Mindful Jar.

A mindful jar works in a couple of ways. First, it will help them to understand what happens when strong emotion starts to take hold of them. Second, it can help them find calm when they are feeling stressed, upset, or overwhelmed. Here's how:

Start with a jar and fill it almost to the top with water. Into the water, add a few big dollops of glitter glue (or school glue and dry glitter). Pop on the lid and give the jar a shake. Here are some words:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2.



'Imagine that the glitter is like your thoughts when you're stressed, mad or upset. See how they whirl around and make it really hard to see clearly? That's why it's so easy to make silly decisions when you're upset – because you're not thinking clearly. Don't worry this is normal and it happens in all of us (yep, grownups too). [Now put the jar down in front of them.] Now watch what happens when you're still for a couple of moments. Keep watching. See how the glitter starts to settle and the water clears? Your mind works the same way. When you're calm for a little while, your thoughts start to settle and you start to see things much clearer.'

The beautiful part of this exercise is that while they are learning about their emotional selves, they are also engaging in an act of mindfulness as they watch the glitter fall to the bottom of the jar.

#### 6. Safari.

Oh but not just any safari! The idea here is to guide them towards switching on their senses, turning down their thoughts, and being fully engaged in the present moment. Take them outside and explain to them that they are on safari, looking for any animal that crawls, flies or walks. Let them know that they have to be quiet and alert, with their hearing, feeling and seeing super-senses switched on so they can discover tiny wild beasts that the world may or may not have seen before.

#### 7. Mindful Smelling.

Take a bunch of delicious smelling things from around home – candles, fresh herbs, flowers, fruit, vanilla, cinnamon, grass – anything – and invite them to breathe in the smell and to feel what happens in their body as they do that. ('The cinnamon reminds me of Christmas,' or maybe 'The lavender makes me feel sleepy.')

#### 8. A Breathing Buddy.

Have them lie down with a soft toy on their tummy. As they breathe, guide them towards noticing the toy moving up and down. This can help them to understand what it feels like to have strong breaths, which is a powerful way to calm themselves when high emotion overwhelms them.

#### 9. A Mindful Walk.

Take a short walk together to help them to learn to be mindful while they're moving. First, ask them to focus on their breath. Then turn their attention to anything else their senses tune in to in the moment – the breeze against their skin, the sound of the trees, the smell of fresh air, the way their body feels as they move. The idea is for them to experience the sensations, rather than to become too 'heady' by thinking too hard about them.

#### 10. The Mindful Snack.

Next time you have a bite to eat together, try mindful eating for a few minutes. 'Let's try something called mindful eating. It's where you slow things down when you eat so you can notice things you don't usually notice. What does your food feel like to touch? What about the smell? What if you squish it a little – what does that feel like? Now take a bite but chew very slowly. Really notice your mouth moving up and down. Can you feel the food against your tongue and between your teeth. What does it taste like? What does it feel like? Keep chewing for a little while (20 to 30 seconds). When you're ready, notice what the food feels like as it moves down your throat and towards your belly.'

#### 11. Guided Meditation.

The **Smiling Minds app** has guided meditations for ages 7 to adult. It's free, easy to use, and brilliant.

Being 'still' can be hard sometimes (for all of us). If your kiddos are squirmy at first, just keep practicing in short bursts until they become more used to it. Afterwards, do something fun with them – give them your full attention with a little chat about what they did, read a story, have a cuddle – whatever works for them, so they associate it with special, fun time.

Anything you do to introduce them to a mindfulness practice will be worth it. In no time at all they'll be doing it on their own and gearing themselves with an incredible skill that will give them a solid, sturdy foundation from which to explore and experience the world.

About the author: *Karen began her career as a psychologist in private practice. She has worked extensively with children teens and families, and in educational and organisation settings. She has lectured and has a Masters in Gestalt Therapy. It is through her work with children, teens and families, that she learned the power of solid information when it is placed in the solid, loving hands of parents or any important person in the life of a child.*



## SAD Is a Treatable Condition

Seasonal affective disorder, also known as SAD, is a type of depression that comes in the fall and leaves in the spring.

Experts believe shorter daylight hours affect two brain chemicals, causing an increase in melatonin and a decrease in serotonin, which can trigger the depression.

People who have SAD can struggle in various ways. Besides feeling depressed, they're likely to lose interest in favorite activities, become short-tempered, crave carbs or struggle with everyday challenges, especially getting out of bed.

Kids and teens are also susceptible. In addition to the symptoms above, kids are likely to become more sensitive, cry more often or struggle to concentrate.

If you notice these changes in yourself or loved ones, there are steps you can take to alleviate these symptoms:

- Schedule a daily walk or some other outdoor activity during daylight hours.
- Use full spectrum (daylight) lightbulbs wherever possible.

Symptoms of SAD can range from mild to severe. If you need additional support, medication, special light boxes and talk therapy are very effective.



### NEED HELP?

Your EAP can provide additional guidance and resources.

**2021** WEBINAR  
SERIES

**NOVEMBER 17, 11am CT**

**Does Winter Make You Feel SAD?**

**REGISTER**

As the days become colder and darker, many of us may feel tired and sluggish. However, if your "winter blahs" interfere with your everyday life, you may be suffering from seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. In this webinar, we'll discuss tips for lifting your mood and finding enjoyment throughout these months.

**Presented by Michael McCafferty**  
Senior FEI Account Manager  
FEI Behavioral Health

# Driving Retirement

By Jane Mahoney, **Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources** (Used with the author's permission)

Driving is a symbol of freedom, independence and self-sufficiency but it is important to consider what happens when declining vision, medication side effects, or a degenerative condition means your loved one is no longer safe to drive. Transitioning from driver to non-driver is a difficult decision and planning ahead can alleviate some anxiety. Just like people plan for retirement when they leave the workforce, “driving retirement” planning helps prepare for a time when driving is no longer safe. It is a proactive move that gives a person control over how to live life outside of the driver's seat. Discussing driving retirement with the person you are (or will be) caring for while the person still drives will make the transition easier.

Consider the following points as you help your care partner map out a driving retirement plan:

**Start by learning what transportation options are available.** Talk to friends, health care providers, the **Dane County Caregiver Program**, the **ADRC**, and **Senior Focal Point** in the area where your care partner lives. Find details on how to utilize them.

**Make a list of your care partner's transportation needs and alternative ways to meet those needs.** In addition to using public transportation options they may be able to order things through the mail, use a delivery service, walk, bicycle, or ask family or friends for rides. Be sensitive to the fact that the driver in transition may not want to depend on family members for transportation, so include a variety of options in your discussion that helps them retain as much independence as possible. If services like LYFT or UBER operate in your area they may be another good option. Include family members and friends in the conversation as you develop the plan and remember to consider transportation for social activities.

**Once the transportation plan is in place, encourage your loved one to start trying out new transportation methods right away.** Go with them as they ride the bus, help them make an online order, or walk with them to a nearby store. This will help to reduce stress and increase confidence.

The next step is to determine when it is time to stop driving. The following are some warning signs of unsafe driving:

- Abrupt lane changes, braking, or accelerating
- Confusion at exits or turns
- Delayed responses to unexpected situations
- Lack of attention to traffic signs or pedestrians
- Increased agitation or irritation while driving
- Vehicle crashes or near misses

There is usually not a specific day when you know it is time to stop driving. Decisions should be based on driving behavior over a period of time, not just a single incident. Because timing can be unclear, have agreed-upon measures in place in the form of a driving contract that may include regular review by family, completion of a driving assessment, or a discussion with a physician to help determine the balance between a person's desire to drive with the need for safety.

When it's time to put the driving retirement plan into action be positive and optimistic. Review the transportation plan and make adjustments as needed. Even when change is unwanted, people have the ability to adapt and thrive. Plan to visit them frequently and be sure that transportation is available to meet their social needs.

Get the conversation started about planning driving retirement to prevent a more difficult scenario in the future. Utilize the **Driving Retirement Brochure & Workbook** and other local resources to help you find the balance between maintaining independence and ensuring safety, for you, your family, and your community.

## Driving Retirement and Transportation Resources:

- Dane County: **Transportation Call Center** (608) 242-6489 Monday—Friday
  - » Provides rides for clinic appointments and surgeries.
- **Wisconsin DOT Mobility Management**
- **Wisconsin DOT: Resources for Older Drivers**
- **AARP Driver Safety**
- **CDC Injury Prevention & Control: Older Drivers Stay Safe behind the Wheel**
- **Mayo Clinic: Older Drivers: 7 Trips for Driver Safety**
- **AAA (American Automotive Association): Senior Driver Safety & Mobility**



# Healthy Expressions of Love for a Healthy Workplace

By Freya Cooper, **FEI Workforce Resilience**

Talking about Love Languages at work might be a slippery slope. After all, things like affection, passion or romance are considered inappropriate for the business community.

But love is a highly complicated, multi-layered matter that should be approached from many angles. Notions such as appreciation, endorsement or respect also refer to love.

So, how can you express love safely in the workplace without making yourself or those around you uncomfortable?

Gary Chapman famously described the concept of “love languages” in his book, *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to your Mate*. It discusses the following five phrases:

- Words of affirmation
- Acts of service
- Quality time
- Gift-giving
- Physical touch

Workplace relationships are more complex than personal ones. Your attitude toward your colleague, boss, or subordinate is a combination of personal and professional relations—and these relationships are not interchangeable. A pleasant person can turn out to be a crummy professional and vice versa.

However, it’s helpful to take a closer look at these phrases and see how we can transform and adapt them for today’s workplace, creating respectful relationships and boosting workplace culture:

**Words of affirmation** should evolve into mentorship and feedback. While words of affirmation may seem appropriate for the workplace, they can also be viewed politically, which can be productive and destructive at the same time. While at work, words of affirmation should encourage constant improvement.

**Quality time** should become workplace bonding. Spending quality time with loved ones helps build strong and enduring relationships, confidence and a sense of belonging. While quality time is also crucial for building healthy workplace relationships, it is much more complex, especially considering our recent quarantine restrictions. In the workplace, quality time might mean taking the time to talk about personal relationships and develop an interest in each other’s lives beyond the workplace.

**Gift-giving.** Instead of being viewed in only a literal sense, gift-giving should be viewed as new opportunities that are given and received with enthusiasm and readiness. For example, managers should provide a clear vision of bonuses, new openings, and perspectives for those ready and willing to receive them. Employees should be ready to prove their readiness by raising a hand or taking a step forward. Gift-giving can also include actions that make other people’s jobs easier, such as helping a colleague with a complicated project or sharing a heavy workload or resources.



**Touch.** While physical touch, other than a handshake or a pat on the back, is inappropriate for the workplace, it’s helpful to “keep in touch” with encouraging touchpoints. For example, this could include writing a colleague or subordinate a message that describes how you appreciate their professional qualities or their contributions to a project’s success. Some workplaces select a special day for these types of celebrations.

For more information on how to praise others and show appreciation in the workplace, please read **How Does Your Personality Affect Your Work?**



Justin Baldoni wants to start a dialogue with men about redefining masculinity -- to figure out ways to be not just good men but good humans. In a warm, personal talk, he shares his effort to reconcile who he is with who the world tells him a man should be. And he has a challenge for men: “See if you can use the same qualities that you feel make you a man to go deeper,” he says. “Your strength, your bravery, your toughness: Are you brave enough to be vulnerable? Are you strong enough to be sensitive? Are you confident enough to listen to the women in your life?”





## Getting Through the Holidays, Part 1

By Lisa Ferentz, LCSW-C, DAPA, **Psychology Today** (Used with the author's permission)

There is a universal expectation and cultural push to spend the holidays with family. Even though the malls pipe in holiday cheer, lights twinkle on houses, and TV ads depict families frolicking in the snow, it's important to keep in mind that this can be a time of great ambivalence and emotional overwhelm for many people. We need to normalize for friends and loved ones that this time of year can be rife with unique and difficult triggers including: feelings of loss and grief; resentment; guilt; anger; anxiety; and even dread.

Despite the pressure to go home for the holidays, many people deserve and need permission to safely and non-judgmentally process the options of either shortening or avoiding family visits that are toxic. It's understandable that for some people it's too emotionally uncomfortable to completely disconnect from extended family. In those cases, it's worth exploring the strategies of setting limits or choosing to visit with "escape clauses" that provide an exit or excuse to leave if the gathering becomes negative or abusive.

Here are some additional suggestions to help navigate potential emotional minefields and vulnerabilities during the holiday season:

1. Pre-plan "safe" conversations, consciously choose who to sit next to and who to avoid during a family gathering.
2. Drive separately to family functions so you can leave when you choose, and stay at a hotel instead of the house you grew up in so you have safe space to re-group.
3. Consider connecting with surrogate family and friends instead of toxic family, and create new holiday traditions that do feel safe and meaningful.
4. Use resources such as 12 step meetings, online chat rooms, and support groups that reinforce the right to set limits while offering alternative venues for social gatherings
5. Spend time doing volunteer work, focusing on altruistic endeavors that create perspective and rekindle a sense of gratitude.
6. Consider the role that spirituality and ritual can play in adding comfort, new meaning, and new memories to this emotionally challenging time of year.

In the next installment we'll look at the connection between the holidays, stress and self-destructive behaviors.



*Thanks for reading,  
we hope you found the information useful!*

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