

## Developing Community Resilience During the COVID-19 Outbreak

I have been fielding requests about community resilience development and want to share with all of you a document that others are finding helpful. I initially created the document (below and pdf attached) for our host entities to distribute to the cohorts (1500-plus people) of N.E.A.R. Master Trainers embedded in 25 states and a province. Dr. Rob Anda, Laura Porter and I train Master Trainers in **Neuroscience, Epigenetics, the ACE Study, and Resilience**; additional information can be found here: <https://www.aceinterface.com/MTE.html>

Which strategies below would your community benefit from as COVID-19 continues rolling out across our nation? Take them and run with it!

Grateful to bounce forward through *all of this* with *all of you!*



Hello Master Trainers!

You are the visionary leaders capable of co-creating with your community partners the strategies, approaches, and structures that will increase community resilience and the time to start is now. Through your mastering of our N.E.A.R. education, you know the three interactive core protective systems:

- 1) Individual capabilities,
- 2) Attachment and belonging with caring and competent people, and
- 3) Protective community, faith and cultural processes.

Resilient communities are empowered communities. With the emergence of COVID-19 comes an opportunity to engage your communities in ways to systematically and sustainably develop increased levels of collective resilience. I invite you to consider a proactive approach by creating conditions to strengthen communities as they move forward.

Many of you have heard us reference the field of physics and speak to changes of state. Placing a pot of water on the stove and turning the heat up so the water transforms from a liquid state to a gas state - steam – is one example. This process is messy as the water boils and splashes; some drops fly out and land on the stove. Although the end result is predictable, the exact journey is not. We can turn the heat on high or intervene and turn the heat down to a rolling boil.

Societies are experiencing a change of state, from pre-COVID-19 through the process of developing a treatment and vaccine. We are being asked to slow the boiling rate from rapid to rolling by implementing physical distancing to minimize the exponential rate, to flatten the curve, of infection. This is the time to start implementing strategies, approaches and structures that support community

resilience development and respect physical distancing. Below are ideas for your consideration, please feel free to adapt as you see fit.

- 1) Save the Date! Begin to plan, with your community, a community-wide gathering to reflect, honor and celebrate once it is safe to be together. Give your community something to look forward to, give them the gift of hope. Hope has three parts – imagine a better future, imagine a path to that future and imagine yourself on that path.
- 2) Consider designating physical locations where cards, flowers, artwork, photos, etc. are posted in solidarity with one another. Embedding this in your community now provides a healing opportunity for residents and can be done with physical distancing. As lockdowns continue to roll out across the country, consider designating some of the locations near groceries and pharmacies. Share the locations on social media to reinforce that ‘we are in this together’. These artifacts could later be incorporated in the celebration suggested above and serve as one way to capture your community’s journey story.
- 3) Families, individuals and groups sheltered in place together could work on a skit, music, drumming, creating costume(s), writing poetry, etc. to share with the community. This could be done at the celebration above, an art walk, art parade, or some other event that has local significance. Communities can create and share the narrative of how they navigated through this time.
- 4) Check with the press in your area – will they begin to report stories of people who have had COVID-19 and how they navigated that experience? What helped them to be doing so well today?
- 5) Consistently illuminate and praise what is working well through social media, radio, local newspapers, newsletters, etc. Are people using social media strategies to create new opportunities to help each other? Are people picking up food from the food bank and delivering it to porches? Or medications?
- 6) Stress can lead to violence - how is your community preparing to respond to family violence calls? Could hot-lines be set up for people who feel that they are losing their self-regulation to call and talk through strategies? Could this be a time when extreme solo-sports and other strategies for managing self-regulation could be collected and shared about how they are navigating this time?
- 7) How are family members and friends of people with mental health challenges getting support? Could there be a virtual respite - some people who agree to "be on first" checking in on someone who might be struggling? Checking in could be phone calls, or another communication that the family/friends knows would be ok with the person.
- 8) Many communities have gangs and all gangs have people providing leadership. If you don't have connections with the gangs in your area, perhaps law enforcement can work with you to connect with key gang members to ask for their ideas about keeping each other safe during this time.

*“Community is a living, spiritual entity, supported by every responsible adult.”*

*~Gregory Cajete*

- 9) For people who already suffer from anxiety, are there places to post what is going well - or what calms fears?

Supporting community resilience requires respect for community efficacy. Since there are big economic impacts, perhaps private donations could help with supplies, or stipends, so people feel they have "work" for this time period. Who doesn't want to support hope-filled action?

As we lean into the core protective systems to increase community resilience, maintaining social connectedness while practicing physical distancing is important and for an expanding group of people – including those who have shifted from working in an office setting to their home and inmates who are no longer allowed visitors; nearly everyone is experiencing a new sense of isolation.

Your leadership is so important for reminding people that none of us is truly alone. We are the ones who are co-creating the future. What we do during difficult times can provide the seeds for celebration and growth once physical distancing is no longer necessary.

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