



# MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS FROM VOLUNTEERING



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by Shelly McAlpin, PPG, NCC

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In this unprecedented time, I find myself reflecting on the role of public service and mental health. Social distancing has created a sense of isolation, adding stress to our already taxed daily lives. Parents continue to struggle to work while simultaneously managing the needs of our children. Some are also experiencing job loss and the financial worries that accompany unemployment. All these added stressors and anxieties build on our overall mental health. In 2021, Wyomingites continue to take care of their neighbors in need by turning to volunteering (virtual and in person via social distance), but did you know they were also caring for their own mental health?

People serving their community are boosting their mental health (CNCS, 2007). Volunteering connects you to others around us. In a world where isolation can feel normal, service has the added benefit of uniting people to their community. This act of kindness is good for our body and mind. Volunteering also helps us make new friends, expand our networks, and connect us to much needed social experiences.

Acts of service counteract the effects of stress, anxiety, depression, and anger (Arnstein et al, 2002) (Brown et al, 2003) (Lawton et al, 2020). Volunteering supports continued social interaction (virtual or in person), which in turn helps create strong support systems and aiding against  
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[www.threetrailsefap.org](http://www.threetrailsefap.org)  
[threetrails@threetrailsefap.org](mailto:threetrails@threetrailsefap.org)



Three Trails EFAP  
812 South David Street  
Casper, WY 82601



P: 307.237.5750  
F: 307.237.5772

## Information on In-Person Services and Telehealth Services

One life lesson we have learned from COVID-19 is to be able to adapt to change. So much change has occurred within all our lives and the same is true for our services at Three Trails. We do now have the use of all our offices and are able to make in person services at more of a 50% weekly availability. This article will cover some of the protocols for in-person and how to request an in-person appointment.



### Availability

Right now, In-Person services are fluctuating at a 50% weekly availability. This of course depends on the counselors scheduled time to work with clients and on the client's flexibility with their schedule.

We have lessened availability with Julie Laib's schedule. She is working on transitioning her private practice in Cody and may not always be available for in-person depending on her travel requirements. Currently, we still need to allow for cleaning after an in-person session and are not able to provide back-to-back in person appointments. The more flexible a client is with their availability the sooner we can get them in and the more frequently they will be seen.

### How to get it started

When you call to schedule your appointment, let us know you want to get in-person started. We require one telehealth (either by phone or zoom) to be done with you and your counselor. The reason we ask you to schedule this telehealth appointment before we can schedule an in-person is so the counselor can verbally discuss with you our protocols for attending in-person.

After you have finished your initial telehealth appointment to discuss the in-person protocols, you can schedule your next session as in-person. Please be aware that you are responsible for making this call to schedule that appointment. If you receive our answer machine, please leave a message. We use a call log system that helps us return messages. We do not return dropped phone calls. We are managing our phone during these times: Monday and Wednesdays from 9am -6pm, Tuesday and Thursday from 9am to 7pm, and Fridays from 9am to 1pm. If we are short staffed, our times for managing the phone may be different.

We will be sending you two in person forms to read and sign for your in-person session. These forms will be sent from our encrypted email provider called Hushmail. The first form is a client procedure form. It will cover in-depth information on where to park, mask requirements, and other attendance information. The other form is an Informed Consent for attending in-person along with a Liability Waiver. Please make sure that all forms are signed within 48 business hours, otherwise they may time out and we will need to send you new forms.

We will also be sending you a telehealth consent form if you have not already electronically signed one. This gives us consent to use telehealth for the initial appointment that is set up to discuss the in-person protocols. There will also be two attachments sent. The first attachment is the Instructions for Telehealth and the other attachment is our General Information page. Please make sure you read all attachments.

### Telehealth Services

Telehealth services are still being offered. Several established clients like the ease of being able to sit comfortably at home. Telehealth services are also 100% mask free! Some counselors have appointments that fall outside of Three Trails usual business hours. These times will have to continue as telehealth.

To schedule a telehealth service, please let us know that you want your appointment to be telehealth when you call. Counselors can provide telehealth either over the phone or through Zoom. Usually, the first appointment is done over the phone, unless the client specifically requests the use of Zoom. Telehealth clients will be receiving the telehealth consent form through Hushmail. We do need them signed within 48 hours if possible. There will also be two attachments sent. The first attachment is the Instructions for Telehealth and the other attachment is our General Information page. Please make sure you read all attachments.

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# FIVE Quick tips to Manage Stress

by Jamie Leslie

We all have stress in our lives. Many of us will notice how it impacts us physically and emotionally, but we do not always know some quick tricks to lesson the symptoms of stress. *Here are some quick tips taken from the Mental Health First Aid USA website.*

## 1. Get A Good Amount of Sleep:

Sleep helps you managing your brain's reaction to stress. It also gives you more energy to manage the external stressors that you might be dealing with. If you are having issues getting a good night's sleep, consider taking a melatonin supplement. It also helps to lesson your blue screen time and stop the use of cell phones or computer about an hour before you go to bed.

## 2. Do One Task at a Time:

Prioritize the most important and start there. If you take on too much at a time you will increase your stress level and feel overwhelmed. It helps to make a to do list with 5 realistic things that you can accomplish.

## 3. Maintain Downtime for Hobbies:

Do not neglect the hobbies that make you happy. They are a vital part of your self-care. Sometimes during busy times, you might need to schedule time for them so they don't get put on the back burner.

## 4. Get some Exercise:

Exercise increased endorphins. This is a happy chemical the brain creates to help manage pain and mood. Exercise also serves as a distraction for our brain and can help lesson ruminating thoughts.

## 5. Talk to Someone:

It is hard to manage stress by yourself. Find a good friend or call a counselor. Having a battle buddy to talk to can help you find more ways to manage your stress.

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### **Hybrid Services**

If you want services with the most availability, then we encourage you to consider hybrid services. Hybrid services involve the use of telehealth and in-person. Clients who have followed through the requirements for in-person and telehealth have the option to use both services. If an in-person session is not available as soon as it is needed, consider setting up a telehealth session. There is a good chance we may have a telehealth session sooner for you. The more flexible You are, the sooner we can get you scheduled and the more frequently you will be seen.

### **Limitations**

Three Trails is a benefit service and we have over four thousand individuals who are able to utilize our services. Therefore, we do have limitations to our services. We schedule one appointment at a time. This policy allows us to have more availability for all the clients that may be able to utilize our services. We also ask clients to focus on one modality at a time. If a client is being seen for couples, we do not schedule individual sessions at the same time. This allows us to have more availability for all the clients that may be able to utilize our services. We are also unable to guarantee same day or weekly services. If this is needed, please talk to your counselor so they may be able to provide a referral.

### **Thank You!**

A special thank you to our partnership businesses! A special thank you to all our clients for following the policies of our services and using our services! We appreciate you all so much and look forward to being a part of our community and our clients' lives for years to come!





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depression. Working with organizations that share your common interest, such as working with children or pets, elevate mood and reduce stress.

Service also helps us express gratitude which increases positivity and boosts happiness. By measuring hormones and brain activity, researchers have discovered giving of oneself to help another person delivers pleasure (Lawton et al, 2020). Not only are we predisposed to help others, but it also helps us gain a sense of purpose (CNCS, 2007) (Atkins et al, 2003) (Haller & Hadler, 2006).

You might be asking yourself; how can I help now? What is virtual volunteering? Today's volunteering includes donating your virtual time and skills to help nonprofits in need. In addition to serving in person, people can find a new place to serve in the virtual world, remotely. This is an opportunity to volunteer from anywhere via phone, computer, or tablet to support a cause you care about. Service can take countless forms including: website design/support, mentoring, data entry, marketing or management, fundraising and outreach, social media promotion, app development, volunteer tracking, blogging, writing or editing, graphic design, photography, marketing/branding, video development, staff support, administrative virtual assistant, phone outreach, and so much more.

How can you become a virtual volunteer? If you are looking for ways to help during the pandemic and beyond, start by going to [www.servewyoming.org](http://www.servewyoming.org) and clicking on "Volunteer". Here you can search by zip code, agency, or area of interest across our state. From there you can look at multiple different categories and opportunities. You can also call ServeWyoming at (866) 737-8304 and they will be happy to help you find the opportunity that is exactly right for you!

By engaging in volunteer experiences, we will continue to help address community problems, and at the same time enhance our own mental health. Take care of each other Wyoming!

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## **Bath Bomb Recipe from Attainable Sustainable via Trish Hussion**

This bath bomb recipe includes lavender, which is often used to help relax and calm the mind. *VeryWellHealth.com* reports that Epsom salts have magnesium in them, and this is naturally used often to treat anxiety and help alleviate insomnia.

### **Materials**

- ½ cup cornstarch
- ½ cup citric acid
- ½ cup Epsom salt
- 1 cup baking soda
- 1 teaspoon Mica powdered soap dye
- 2 tablespoons dried lavender flowers
- 10 drops lavender essential oil
- 2 ½ tablespoons coconut oil, melted
- 1 tablespoon water
- Tools
- Bath bomb molds

### **Instructions**

1. In a large bowl, whisk together cornstarch, citric acid, salt, baking soda, mica powder, and lavender essential Oils .In a small measuring cup, whisk together essential oil, coconut oil, and water.
2. Very slowly (to avoid as much fizzing as possible) add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients.
3. Stir and mash together until it resembles sand.
4. Immediately transfer bath bomb mixture into bath bomb molds, pressing mixture tightly into each side and adding a little to overflow each side of the mold
5. Press the mold together and twist until closed.
6. Allow bath bombs to rest (and dry) for at least 24 hours.
7. To remove the bath bombs from the molds, tap the outside of the mold gently. Then, twist each side of the mold and pull to remove the bath bomb.
8. To give as a gift, place in an airtight jar.

