

CROSSROADS TO HEALTH

"Beloved, I hope you are prospering in every respect and are in good health,
just as your soul is prospering." 3 John 1:2

Fall health notices often include reminders to get your flu shot, change the batteries in your smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detectors, and to be alert to things you can do to detect breast cancer. These are all important ways in which we can protect our physical health, but as we prepare for the upcoming winter months, with longer periods of darkness and fewer times to be out socializing, it's important that we make preparations for our mental health, as well.

One of the most helpful strategies for being mentally healthy is to make sure that we have the chance to interact with others, to offer our support and to gain theirs.

Our newly renovated sanctuary offers many opportunities to reach out and connect with one another.

- Many of us are sitting in a different spot at Mass and find ourselves surrounded by people we haven't yet met. Take a moment to quietly introduce yourself to the people around you.
- We are fortunate to have a BIG parish. Unfortunately, that means there are people we say hello to every week, but don't know their names. Go ahead and introduce yourself to those folks, too. They'll be glad that you cared enough to ask, and thankful that they have a chance to learn your name, as well.
- Stop and talk with a child who was at Mass. It's easy to notice a little one who is having a difficult day, but also try to notice and thank children who are doing their very best.
- Look out for people who might need a hand getting to and from their cars. It can be difficult to ask for help. Challenge yourself to offer assistance before anyone has to ask.
- Is there a reader whose strong voice you really like? A cantor who you enjoy listening to? An Extraordinary Minister or Hospitality person who makes you feel especially welcome? Stop and let these volunteers know that they are appreciated.
- We are ALL disciples and can all help pray for one another. Remember your parish friends in your prayers and don't be afraid to ask them to join in praying for your intentions, too.

The most important connection we can make for our mental and physical health is a close connection with God. Numerous scientific studies have shown the benefits of taking a mental break. These benefits include increased attention span, improved productivity and greater creativity. Mental breaks also help us to better remember new information and to reduce stress levels.

As Christians, we have access to an amazing mental break - PRAYER.

The next time you feel stressed out by responsibilities or interactions at work, home, school or anywhere else, take a break to pray before you take any other action.

When teaching young children how to cross a street, we tell them to “Stop, Look and Listen”. It's a good reminder to adults faced with stressful situations, too.

STOP and be still. Take a few deep breaths. Remember that you are in God's presence and He is waiting to help.

LOOK at the situation with God's help. What about the situation is causing you strong emotions? Why might it be setting off such strong feelings? Is there anything else going on in your life at that very same moment - are you tired, hungry, bothered by former situations or future worries? Can you think of a time when Jesus was in a situation that caused him similar emotions? How did he respond?

LISTEN - listen for God's answer. Trust that He will calm the storm or calm the child, or both. Often we don't need to act until after the “storm” has passed. Pause and ask God how He would like you to respond, then wait to hear his answer before making a decision or adopting a course of action.