

## IMAGINE

MAKING CHANGES THAT MATTER

## COVID-19 SPECIAL ISSUE: LIVING, LEARNING AND ADAPTING TO UNCERTAIN TIMES

### A SERVICE UPDATE FROM LAUREL BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT SERVICES

With this issue of Imagine, you will find our plan for continued service delivery during the Covid-19 health crisis. We now know that we have entered a new reality. The plan we have in place will allow us to continue to provide much needed support to individuals, caregivers, behaviour leads and agency partners in the region. Our commitment to enriching lives through skill development, community capacity building, and community integration has not changed.

We are learning how to effectively move in-person supports and various trainings to online digital platforms. We have embraced ethical telehealth principles and ramped up our use of technology. One of the greatest benefits so far is time saved. We are expanding our reach across a vast geography, while increasing our direct service hours. In some ways, this pandemic has accelerated our ability to provide services and training in the Okanagan. Please read our Business Continuation Plan for details.

In times of crisis, there is also opportunity. We are mindful that for some, there may be a need for equipment, connectivity and a “help desk” style of support to level the playing field and provide equitable access to our services. Please let us know if there is anything that we can do to assist in this area.

As you pick up your favourite cup of brew and peruse the current issue of Imagine, notice how the inclusion tip, tech tools, training room and leap forward story all illustrate how we can work together while staying safe. In closing, we hope to leave you feeling invigorated and inspired!

Thank you for partnering with Laurel Behaviour Support Services. If you have any questions, or suggestions, please contact us:

Rebecca (Becky) Roth, Clinical Supervisor at [Rebecca.Roth@posabilities.ca](mailto:Rebecca.Roth@posabilities.ca)

Kavita Kamat, Clinical Director at [KKamat@posabilities.ca](mailto:KKamat@posabilities.ca)

Vinita Prasad, Team Manager at [Vinita.Prasad@posabilities.ca](mailto:Vinita.Prasad@posabilities.ca)

# LEAP FORWARD WITH (ONLINE) COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS!

CONTRIBUTED BY ALYSHA DONKO, M.SC., BCBA, BEHAVIOUR CONSULTANT

Our world has recently turned upside down, and things certainly look different these days. With the current recommendations from health professionals to practice physical distancing and to avoid in-person gatherings, community inclusion services look different too. Many of the agencies in our community have stepped up and used their creativity to develop online opportunities to maintain connections amongst the folks they support.



Community Connections (CC) support workers are using tools like Facebook Messenger and Zoom to the deepen the online experiences of learning and connection. They have embraced free technology that is familiar to many and taken advantage of features like creating space for private conversations, interest-based groups, text, audio and video messaging. CC now supports all kinds of virtual experiences—video gaming, a book club and a colouring group to name a few. There are also groups that meet to play BINGO or trivia games over video chat. A men’s group now “Zooms” and there is even a virtual coffee group for sips and chats.

Although the stress of what’s happening in the world is challenging everyone’s ability to maintain emotional, mental, and physical health, simple tech tools are also becoming part of the remedy.

Connections has set up a few other supportive groups as well, infusing positivity and healthy habits into everyday living. Their Gratitude Group, for example, works on fostering a positive mindset. Each participant keeps a journal and, with support, completes a morning exercise (such as mirror work). They also record an inspirational reading, which is listened to every night, providing “bookends of positivity” to each day!

Connections’ Walking Group brings together individual walkers on their respective outings through the chat function of the Messenger app. Each group member counts their steps and can send out challenges to others!

The Healthy Eating Group supports individuals who live independently with meal preparation. Members learn how to create their own meal plans and how to use portioned containers to prepare just the right amount for their current meal and leftovers. Pictures of meals and snacks, as well as new recipes, are proudly shared online with other members.

Roy is a gentleman who has taken full advantage of all the online groups that Community Connections offers. He participates in virtual BINGO, Gratitude, Healthy Eating and Walking groups. In fact, Roy participates in the Walking Group 2-3 times every day and has been consistently achieving his big daily goal of 20,000 steps!

Roy says, “Attending the different groups makes me feel good, and I am learning a lot.” He adds, “My favourite part of the group is seeing everyone on the video, and seeing friends.”

Some group members are stepping forward to host their own groups! Yoga, Stretching/ Toning Workouts, and Dance Classes are blossoming online.



*Continued on next page...*

## Story continued...

While it has been challenging to adjust to this new way of living, it's wonderful to see the community come together and break through the barriers posed by physical distancing, to maintain overall health and wellness, including skill development and other learnings. I look forward to hearing about even more creative solutions that individuals and their supporters are coming up with to stay healthy and connected!

**Physical distancing doesn't have to mean social isolation.** CoMakeDo (brought to you by Kudoz, Real Talk, Meraki and friends) is offering up a range of experiences to connect neurodiverse folks with self, community, and the wider world. The experiences take place online and over the phone, for those without Internet access. They also offer tech support for those new to digital platforms. Check out their weekly calendar at [www.comakedo.ca](http://www.comakedo.ca) to discover chats, classes, digital cafes and more!



## INCLUSIVE TIP OF THE MONTH INCLUSION SPRINGS FROM QUARANTINE

CONTRIBUTED BY MAGDALEN DYDULA, ECE, ABS, MPED., BEHAVIOUR CONSULTANT

Let's take a moment to recognize that we are all experiencing disruptions in our daily routines. Change is everywhere we look, from the people we connect with and who support us, to the schedules we keep, the places we visit, and the events we now mourn the loss of. However, that doesn't mean we can't come up with inclusion tips for you! Take a look at how the following things that we can take control of, will set the stage for inclusion moving forward.



### SELF-CARE: BUILD THE FOUNDATION

- Good sleep hygiene supports a positive mood.
- A consistent schedule and routine promotes comfort in a time of uncertainty, and emotional stability.
- Exercise/release of energy helps manage anxiety and related challenges.



### SKILL DEVELOPMENT: TAKE YOUR TIME

Now is the time to encourage folks to take responsibility for activities in the home, as there isn't the urge to rush out the door for the bus!

- Engage in the activities of daily living – don't forget to shower, groom yourself and dress for those online video chats.
- Participate in chores – wipe those hard surfaces (twice!), and encourage everyone in the home to contribute to keeping each other safe. Feeling like you are part of the team builds a sense of purpose and confidence.
- Maintain a healthy/well-balanced diet – prepare nutritious food and build skills to host visitors when possible to do so again.



### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: GROW THE CIRCLE

- Gardening – experience the satisfaction of planting a veggie garden. One day, you may consider joining a community garden down the road.
- Engage in your favourite, and at least one new, leisure skill – join an online group and play trivia games, or try yoga! See Alysha's article on page 2 for more ideas.
- Socialize with your family/housemates – see if you can expand the circle at this precious time when everyone is craving connection. How about a Netflix or Livestream watch party, or chatting over the fence or at the curb with a neighbour?

If you would like to chat about appropriate goals, strategies and how to help motivate a person to keep moving forward, please connect with us!



**[www.LaurelBC.ca](http://www.LaurelBC.ca) or  
call toll-free 1-855-437-7095**





## TECH TALK: SPENDING TIME WITH LOVED ONES DESPITE PHYSICAL DISTANCING

CONTRIBUTED BY BRANDON BEATON, MPED ABA, BSC, BEHAVIOUR CONSULTANT

Physical distancing is hard for everyone. You want to spend time with your friends and family members, but you do not want to put your health and the health of those you care about at risk. What can you do?

Do you have a smart phone, or another device that can access the internet? Do many of your friends and family members have this as well?

Then allow me to introduce you to: **Houseparty**

Houseparty is a free-to-use social networking app that allows you to easily make video calls to those you care about (as long as they have the app as well). The app will alert you when friends and family members are using Houseparty. Up to 8 people can join a single call. You can also change your status to “around” during those moments when you are too busy to chat, but still want to know what your friends and family are doing.



Although Houseparty is a great way to connect with the people you care about, it does not offer much in terms of entertainment. However, for that purpose, you might want to combine it with some virtual party games.

Do you have an Xbox One, PS4, or Nintendo Switch? Are you willing to spend a few extra dollars for entertainment?

Then let me introduce you to: **Jackbox Games**

Jackbox Games is a small company that creates “irreverent party games” that amuse a relatively large audience. They seem to have something for everyone including trivia games, a game where you design t-shirt logos, and even a game where you try to sell your own inventions! Individual Jackbox games can be purchased, or you can purchase a variety of games through a party pack. Once purchased, Jackbox games can be initiated by the host. Up to 8 people can join the game and up to 10,000 people can be audience members!



To join a game, all you have to do is type [www.jackbox.tv](http://www.jackbox.tv) on an internet browser and enter the host’s room code. It is advisable to have a video streaming app like Houseparty available while playing Jackbox games for communication purposes. Although Jackbox games are a fun way to spend time with your friends and family, pay close attention to the game specs found at the bottom of the page before purchasing—not all games are family-friendly!

# THE TRAINING ROOM: FREE WORKSHOPS



SAVE  
*the*  
DATE

## Connect with PEERS® for Young Adults

North and South  
Okanagan

A 16-week social skills program designed to bring young adults (ages 18-35) together to connect and build friendships. The PEERS® curriculum is evidence-based and focuses on teaching friendship skills and important social behaviours.

**LOCATION:** Online

**DATE:** Every Thursday from May 21 - September 3, 2020

**TIME:** 6:00pm - 7:30pm

**REGISTRATION:** [www.laurelbc.ca/cwp-2020](http://www.laurelbc.ca/cwp-2020)

Upcoming workshops will take place online on virtual platforms. Participants will need a device and internet connection.



## LINK! Safety, Relationships, Sexuality

North and South  
Okanagan

Providing adults with disabilities individualized training on hygiene, sexuality, relationships and ways to stay safe.

### MANDATORY SESSIONS

All participants must complete both mandatory sessions before enrolling in any elective sessions. Sessions take place from 2:00 - 4:00 pm.

- Knowing Your Rights, Consent, and the Law - June 2
- The Basics (Anatomy, Public vs. Private) - June 4

### ELECTIVE SESSIONS

Participants can choose as many elective sessions as they would like. Sessions take place from 2:00 - 4:00 pm.

- Different Types of Touch and Trusted People - June 9
- Self-Care - June 11
- Gender and Identity - June 16
- Relationships and Decision Making - June 18
- Online Safety and Pornography - June 23
- Dating and Break-Ups - June 25
- Thinking about Sex (Determining "Readiness", Types of Sexual Activity) - June 30
- Safer Sex (STIs and Contraception) - July 2

**REGISTRATION:** [www.laurelbc.ca/sa-2020](http://www.laurelbc.ca/sa-2020)

For more information about the program and/or eligibility criteria, please call 1-855-437-7095 or email [rebecca.roth@posAbilities.ca](mailto:rebecca.roth@posAbilities.ca)

## Understanding How Anxiety Impacts Us and Practical Strategies to Manage Anxiety

Join other Home-Share Providers (both Direct and Agency Coordinated) and those utilizing Individualized Funding or a Person-Centered Society (Micro-Board) for a discussion on how anxiety impacts a person served, and what are some practical strategies to manage anxiety. Participants will come away having a greater understanding of how anxiety manifests itself and will be equipped with various practical strategies to assist with anxiety as well.

### North Okanagan

**LOCATION:** Virtual Platform (Zoom)

**DATE:** June 8, 2020

**TIME:** 12:00pm - 1:30pm

### South Okanagan

**LOCATION:** Virtual Platform (Zoom)

**DATE:** June 11, 2020

**TIME:** 12:00pm - 1:30pm

**REGISTRATION:** Due to limited spaces, registration is required.

To register, please call 778-945-1435 or email [rebecca.roth@posabilities.ca](mailto:rebecca.roth@posabilities.ca)

To learn more about LBSS, visit [www.LaurelBC.ca](http://www.LaurelBC.ca) or call toll-free 1-855-437-7095.