

SUMMER 2021

IT'S ACHIEVABLE

The Achievable Foundation Newsletter



Carmen's Corner

Carmen Ibarra, CEO



The importance of good mental health is in the headlines like never before. From the mental health struggles of professional athletes like Michael Phelps, Naomi Osaka and Simone Biles to the challenges brought on by the lingering coronavirus pandemic, it's a topic high on our nation's health agenda.

According to *Social Work Today*, it is conservatively estimated that 33% of individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities also have a mental illness. That's dramatically higher than the general population, which is estimated at 20% (source: National Alliance on Mental Illness). Mental health issues are also more common among the other vulnerable populations Achievable serves. According to the CDC, for example, individuals living below the poverty level are nearly 2.5 times more likely to have depression than those at or above the poverty level.

As cases are once again on the rise among the unvaccinated, COVID-19 continues to impact our daily lives, including our mental health. With Los Angeles County (and Disneyland) recently reinstating the indoor mask mandate regardless of vaccination status and the highly contagious Delta variant in the headlines, we're continually reminded that we still have a bit of a journey ahead of us.

Before the pandemic, about one in 10 adults nationwide reported symptoms of anxiety or depression. Yet during the pandemic, about four in 10 adults have reported these issues – a four-fold increase! In addition, adults have reported other negative impacts on their well-being, such as difficulty sleeping (see page 6 for sleep hygiene tips) or increased alcohol or substance abuse, according to The Kaiser Family Foundation.

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Good mental health is critical – and as challenges caused by COVID-19 continue to linger, it's particularly essential. At Achievable, we are making mental health a top priority. We've responded in several ways, including:

- Adding a second mental health professional to our team, Tiffany Saucer, DSW.
- Focusing on mental health during our recent leadership retreat.
- Increasing our use of telehealth in providing mental health and other types of care to Achievable's consumers.

We've all been in this together – and we need to keep persevering for just a bit longer. Thanks to your support, The Achievable Foundation has thrived during the pandemic, allowing us to be there for our consumers and their families during this most challenging time. Thank you for joining us on the journey.



STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR PEOPLE WITH IDD

Tips for Caregivers and Family Members

Source: State of Minnesota - Department of Human Services

Deep Breathing. Teach the person to take long, slow, deep breaths. Count to at least 5 for each in-breath and each out-breath. Generally, starting with demonstrations works well. Some people will raise their hand while breathing in, and lower the hand while breathing out. That visual often helps. Some people also point in or out of their mouths while deep breathing to help cue inhaling and exhaling. Even doing this for a few moments can really help a person to relax. It doesn't have to be for long times to work.

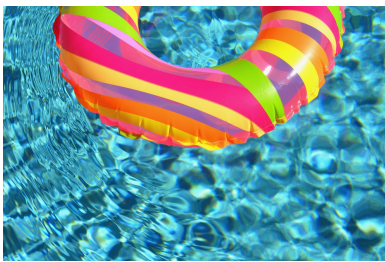
Visual Meditation. Find a picture of something that the person finds calming. Examples would be a picture of the person's favorite place, a picture of an animal, or a picture of a favorite thing. You also can find a picture with some motion in it, if that works better for the person, such as a fireplace video or a waterfall video. These can be found for free on video-streaming websites. Create a brief routine with the person in which you talk about all of the things in that picture that are good. For example, with a picture of a cat, talk about all of the things that are loved about a cat. As you talk through the things that are loved, involve other senses as well. Continuing with the cat example, talk about hearing the cat purr or how good cats smell. If the person doesn't have a favorite picture, try showing the person different pictures. Landscapes, especially traditional Asian landscape paintings are very calming. People also seem to like pictures that show water. Videos of waves can be pleasant.



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Long Walks while you Teach Deep Breathing Relaxation. Many people have a lot of nervous energy, and going for power walks can be really calming. Walking around an enclosed track or on a circular path can make this easier at times. This strategy is often of extra help for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Walk with the person, and while you are walking demonstrate for the person doing deep breathing, and tell the person what you are doing. You can encourage the person to deep breathe with you as you walk. This works best when it is not described as exercise. Simply ask the person to go on a walk with you. Tell the person that the walking feels really good and is calming.



Aquatics for People with Physical Disabilities. Many people with physical disabilities as well as IDD have never been in water. Aquatics can be an excellent part of a relaxation program. Many pools now have lifts to assist people with disabilities to get in and out of pools. Simply being in the water can be relaxing, but stretching in the water might be good as well.

Listening to Music. Many typical people find listening to music relaxing, and this can be true for people with IDD as well. Deliberately make time to do nothing but listen to music, as opposed to having music on in the background. Remember that different people find different kinds of music relaxing. Try different kinds of music. One particularly helpful thing about using music to help relax is that it helps distract people from things that they are worrying about.

Simply Adopt a Relaxed Posture. Teaching a person how to adopt a relaxed posture can be an effective means of reducing stress. Key elements are: (1) feet on the floor, (2) knees at a 90-degree angle, (3) back straight, (4) shoulders straight to the side, (5) head balanced and pointed up. Sit across from the person, and adopt the posture yourself. Show the person exactly what you are doing. The exact posture can be modified if the person has physical challenges. These different strategies can be combined. For example, adopting a relaxed posture and listening to music can be done together.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation. Tighten and release muscles one at a time, starting from toes and moving all the way up to the person's scalp. Only use the body parts that the person can understand. For example, if a person doesn't understand the concept of scalp muscles, stop with the face. Please note that this should not be used with somebody who has muscle spasticity (tightness) who might find releasing too difficult.

The Welcome Table - A Case Study

Thanks to a recent grant from the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health in Palo Alto, The Achievable Foundation was recently profiled in a case study conducted by Informing Change, a consulting firm based in Berkeley, CA. Informing Change reviewed background materials and conducted interviews with patients, family members, community partners, funders, Board members, and staff to develop the case study.

In the study's introduction, Achievable's health center model is compared to the lyrics of an American Southern Gospel song, "The Welcome Table." Patient stories resonate with the struggle and weariness of seeking a welcome table – and finding it at Achievable.

The study also cited four major forces behind Achievable's creation of its health center:

- The Board's vision, research and planning
- Partnership with the Westside Regional Center
- Obtaining Federal Qualified Health Center (FQHC) status
- Fundraising and private funding

Achievable's Health Center was custom-built to offer an accessible environment that promotes wellness and comfort for all patients, including adaptive equipment in all exam rooms for those with mobility challenges and special needs. The Health Center offers a full range of primary care services, integrated mental health care, enabling services, and some specialty care.



To ensure comprehensive care for patients with complex needs, patients can also receive extended visits up to double the time other health centers provide. In addition, all patients have access to supportive services, including transportation assistance, referral coordination, and assistance with enrollment for other community-based programs and resources.

Ultimately, Achievable is all about providing a welcome table for those we are privileged to serve. Perhaps a patient's family member says it best: "The drive to Achievable is a little far, but I'll drive to Mars if I have to, to get that kind of caring."

You can read the complete study [here](#).



MEET ACHIEVABLE'S DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, CHRISTOPHER BARRETT

A Career Committed to Community Health

Growth. It's a word that aptly describes Christopher Barrett's life and career. He's witnessed the dramatic growth of Achievable's Health Center as one of its first employees. He's shepherded the growth of his own career. And, in his personal life, he's watching his three sons grow each and every day.

Christopher has been with Achievable's Health Center from the very beginning. He discovered his passion for working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) while pursuing graduate studies in public health at UCLA, along with six years in various positions with the Westside Regional Center (WRC). When Chris had an opportunity to continue his work and join Achievable as an employee in July, 2013, right before the Health Center opened, he jumped at the opportunity.

Christopher has witnessed Achievable's impressive growth first-hand, from serving about 200 patients in its first year to about 2,000 in 2020 – a 10-fold growth in just seven years. His position has evolved as well, from IT and Facilities Manager to IT and Programs Manager to his recent promotion as Director of Operations.

"One of the things that helped cement my passion for Achievable's mission was my previous work as a patient care coordinator at WRC," states Christopher. "You develop a special bond with the people you are serving. I take a lot of pleasure in seeing some of the same patients I served at WRC who are now patients at Achievable – it's been great to see the continuity of care."

Christopher earned a B.S. in Biology and Psychology from Cal State Fullerton, followed by an M.S. in Public Health from UCLA. In 2016, he successfully completed UCSF's Managing to Leading Leadership Development Program, a program that helped cement his journey to grow as a leader in the Los Angeles County healthcare space. He is still active in that program as an alumnus, building an impressive professional network with other community clinic leaders.

Away from Achievable, Christopher enjoys spending time with his family – wife Erin (a lecturer at California State University, Dominguez Hills who is also pursuing her Ph.D. in Psychology) and their three sons, ages 15, 9 and 7. Between his sons' involvement in sports (primarily soccer and baseball) and other activities, he tries to get in as many family moments as he can each week.

"Achievable is on the precipice of taking its next major step," concludes Christopher. "We're no longer a fledgling community clinic, but a health center with a large footprint in our community. I see a lot of opportunity for Achievable. Members of the community with IDD and other vulnerable populations in our community can have a hard time finding quality health care that meets their needs – and I'm proud that Achievable is rising to the challenge of addressing their needs. I am excited to play a role in Achievable's future growth as we look to expand our abilities to meet the needs of many more in our community."



SLEEP HYGIENE

What is sleep hygiene?

"Sleep hygiene" is used to describe good sleep habits. Many of us don't pay attention to our sleeping habits, but they are essential.

Set a schedule.

Establish a regular sleep schedule every day of the week. Don't sleep in more than an hour, even on your off days.

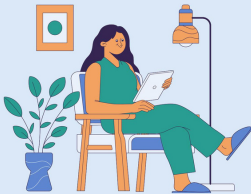


Don't force yourself to sleep.



If you haven't fallen asleep after 20 minutes, get up and do something calming. Read a book, draw, or write in a journal. Avoid computer, TV, and phone screens, or anything else that's stimulating and could lead to becoming *more* awake.

Avoid napping.



Napping during the day will make sleep more difficult at night. Naps that are over an hour long, or those that are later in the day, are especially harmful for sleep hygiene.

Exercise and eat well.

A healthy diet and exercise can lead to better sleep. However, avoid strenuous exercise and big meals for 2 hours before going to bed.



Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine.

Consuming caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine can affect your ability to fall asleep and the quality of your sleep, even if they're used earlier in the day. Remember, caffeine can stay in your body for up to 12 hours, and even decaf coffee has some caffeine!



Sleep in a comfortable environment.

It's important to sleep in an area that's adequately quiet, comfortable, and dark. Try using an eye mask, ear plugs, fans, or white noise if necessary.



Use your bed only for sleep.



If your body learns to associate your bed with sleep, you'll start to feel tired as soon as you lie down. Using your phone, watching TV, or doing other waking activities in bed can have the opposite effect, causing you to become more alert.

WINE, CHEESE AND ZOOM

Like many fundraising events held during the pandemic, The Achievable Foundation pivoted and hosted its annual wine tasting event via Zoom on June 10. The event raised funds for telehealth, personal protective equipment (PPE) and vaccines. We're especially pleased to highlight our event sponsors for their particularly generous support:

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Nancy & Larry Levitt



Partner Sponsors

Golden Life Supported Living Agency, Inc.

Carmen Ibarra



Wine Sponsor



Thanks to everyone who enjoyed this festive Zoom gathering while supporting the important work of Achievable!

Why Give to Achievable?

As a not-for-profit organization, charitable gifts are critical to funding Achievable's mission. Gifts bridge the gap between funds provided by health insurance, co-pays and government grants and the actual cost of delivering care to Achievable's patients, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Did you know, for example, that the average patient with IDD requires a longer patient visit than the typical patient? Or, that Achievable has special equipment – such as exam tables for those with mobility issues – that is funded entirely by charitable donations?

On average, about 25% of Achievable's budget is generated by philanthropy each year – charitable gifts from individuals, families, businesses, and private foundations that share a passion for our mission. Your donation will support people like Jeanette and her son Jeremy*, a young man with severe autism. After months of being told by countless medical practices that they "don't see that type of patient," Jeremy found a medical home at Achievable.

During this first quarter of our new fiscal year, we ask you to consider how your next charitable gift will enhance the lives of Achievable patients and their families - people like Jeremy and Jeanette. Please [click here](#) to make an online gift today, or call (424) 266-7483 for additional information.



Words of Praise for Achievable

"What I love about Achievable is the time, the thoroughness, and having a doctor who knows our story. My son has such a complex story. To have a doctor sit and listen for an hour, not just 10 minutes, and take a holistic approach was amazing."

"I feel like the doctor actually listens to me - his mother - and wants to know my point of view."

"The drive to Achievable is a little far, but I'll drive to Mars if I have to, to get that kind of caring."

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