



# The FRAKES Files

20-08

Director Scott R. Frakes  
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Dear NDCS Teammates,

We talk about the importance of taking care of ourselves, and each other. Eating right, exercising, getting enough sleep, pursuing hobbies outside of work, and being with friends and family are some ways we can maintain good health. All of those can be challenging for people working in corrections, and COVID-19 has added more challenges. So what can you do lower your risks, and improve your physical wellness?

- **Exercise safely:** The gym is closed, team sports are off the table, and it is not easy to find time to go exercise. Try a 30-minute brisk walk every day while you practice social distancing, or some quick sit-ups in the living room, or play a **Zumba®** video on YouTube. Exercise does not need to be highly structured or complicated. Moving your body parts will help lubricate your joints, burn a few calories, reduce stress, help your breathing, and perhaps most importantly, increase your immunity to illness. Daily exercise is one of the very best investments you can make in yourself.
- **Eat well:** As tasty as take-out food can be, it is even more difficult right now to find healthy options. Moderation is key. If you love to cook (and I do), this is great time to explore new recipes and do some experimenting. I've been challenging myself to make some things I don't usually cook, using only what's in my house. Last night's pasta and meatballs with pesto was a hit. Last Friday's cheeseburgers on soft tortillas, not as popular... If you don't spend a lot of time in the kitchen, there's never been a better time to sharpen your skills. Preparing food at home can be better nutritionally, and leftovers for lunches are much healthier than vending machine food. When you pair eating well (or just better) with exercising, you have a good health force multiplier.
- **Shop safely:** Every unnecessary trip into the community increases your risk of exposure to COVID-19. Designate one family member to do the grocery shopping, and try to go only once a week. The primary cook should think about meals for the week, and prepare a list. I've never been good at making a shopping list, but I'm doing it now. Watch your expiration dates on refrigerated foods. Don't buy more than you and your family can consume before it goes bad. If you keep frozen foods, be sure to rotate and use before freezer burn sets in. We don't have a food shortage in America, but we still have supply line problems.
- **Social distancing:** It has been over month since we started getting serious about social distancing, and we are not done yet. It is not easy to be away from family, friends, and other social activities. A family can only play so many hands of **UNO™** before the game shifts to 52-card pickup. Of all of the strategies that are slowing the spread of COVID-19, social distancing is one of the most effective. It is important that we limit our community exposure as long as necessary. The Nebraska Crossing Outlets may be reopening soon, but the health of you and your family is worth far more than a shopping trip.
- **Humor:** Most people agree that laughing is good for relieving stress and tension, but does it really help your physical health? The Mayo Clinic says that laughing not only makes you feel better immediately, it can also improve your immune system and relieve pain. "Negative thoughts manifest into chemical reactions that can affect your body by bringing more stress into your system and decreasing your immunity. By contrast, positive thoughts can actually release neuropeptides that help fight stress and potentially more-serious illnesses. Laughter may ease pain by causing the body to produce its own natural painkillers."

Right now, in this moment, it is difficult for all of us to see the forest through the trees. We are focused on the details that help us get through our days. Eventually, we will emerge from other side of this experience wiser about what disease looks like and how to manage it. We will have developed new technologies and we will have a deeper appreciation for how we interact with each other in meaningful ways. As we move toward that place, we need to keep the faith, stay healthy and continue to take care of each other in the best way we know how.

Be well!



Scott R. Frakes

