

# Healthy Georgia Connections

Issue No. 2

NEWS YOU CAN USE FROM **UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA** COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

## EXTENSION FEATURE

### Alone together online: mastering the transition to virtual teams

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The COVID-19 pandemic has presented an entirely new host of challenges to our modern-day work life. Social distancing recommendations and shelter-in-place ordinances have moved many office workers to mandatory telework arrangements.

Where before team members in the office could communicate by bumping into each other in the break room, there is now the homebound, isolated worker bee who has to intentionally include team members in email conversations.

## ABOUT HEALTHY GEORGIA



Healthy Georgia encompasses all of UGA Extension's work in community health and wellness programming across the state. Our goal is to deliver timely and useful content about agriculture, the environment, communities, youth and

families that will create a better Georgia.

We are committed to doing all we can to help Georgians during the COVID-19 pandemic by offering resources on sanitizing, hand washing, food safety, finances and agricultural operations.

For COVID-19 resources, visit [extension.uga.edu/emergencies](https://extension.uga.edu/emergencies).

Virtual teams will be the new normal for many accustomed to office work over the next several weeks, or even months, until the concerns surrounding COVID-19 subside enough for public health officials to feel comfortable with reopening offices.

For some, working online is not a huge shift, but for others transitioning to the virtual environment feels like an out-of-body experience. How then do we get together to make our online teams work? Through enhanced communication, clearly defined roles and a focus on outcomes, virtual teams have a greater chance of success.

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**Alone together** *continued from last page*

### SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Communication is an important piece of the puzzle in which quality is more important than quantity. Because online teaming can feel fragmented and distant, it is important to use the most appropriate mode of communication.

Email and text communication can be abrupt or sometimes impersonal. The use of video calls and conferencing platforms can allow for people to continue to see each other while listening to voices and reading facial expressions and nonverbal cues. It is also more engaging to talk “face-to-face” versus simply through a written exchange.

Understanding roles and deadlines are linchpins of virtual team success. Clearly defined roles will allow for employees to work in their specific function without duplicating efforts or getting in the way of others. When office interactions are removed, there is less natural informal information flow and more solitary work time.

It is important for employees to understand their role on the team and to distribute responsibilities fairly. When everyone is working in defined areas, people feel more comfortable taking ownership of their duties and perform at a higher level.

### TASK MANAGEMENT

Managers who suddenly switch to a virtual environment may have a difficult time learning how to manage workflow and their employees without being in the office. If the team does not have a virtual project management system where all work is tracked or there is not a scheduled time to check in, managers can feel like they are on a different planet than their team.

Finding project management software where employees can enter projects online with details for team members to help complete work is one step toward organizing your team virtually and providing transparency for all team members.

Overall, learning how to avoid the pitfalls of poor communication, ambiguous roles on teams, and task-centered rather than outcome-centered management can increase your likelihood of virtual team success.

Working alone online can feel very different than the typical work day in the office, but remember that we are all in this together. Lean on your team through meaningful interactions when you need it in order to pull through the new normal of a virtual workplace environment.

## 4-H YOUTH

# Virtual environmental education series connects students to Georgia 4-H lessons

**Cris DeRevere**

*Georgia 4-H public relations coordinator, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences*



To continue reaching students, Georgia 4-H centers have created “From the Mountains to the Sea,” an online educational series that began on March 30. A new lesson will be added every weekday through May 22.

Each weekday afternoon, a different Georgia 4-H center uploads or livestreams an environmental education lesson. Lessons will cover a range of topics such as herpetology, entomology, and beach or stream ecology, highlighting specific amenities at the 4-H centers including historic landmarks, salt marshes, tidal creeks, natural history museums and species exhibits.

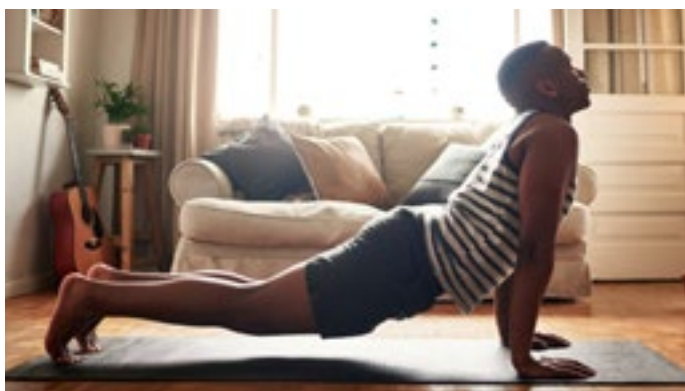
View the series archive at [tinyurl.com/4hmountains2sea](https://tinyurl.com/4hmountains2sea). To read more and follow the centers on social media, visit [t.uga.edu/5QB](https://t.uga.edu/5QB).

**FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES****Ways to combat stress, boost well-being**

Anna Scheyett  
Dean, UGA School of Social Work

The coronavirus is posing huge health challenges to our communities and impacts everything from jobs to families. Many things feel like they're out of our control, and the stress keeps building. While we can't control a virus or the economy, we can take care of our emotions and health and become more resilient against stress.

**Take care of yourself physically.** We all know to do this, but it's important to commit to it. Eat three good meals a day that include fruits and vegetables. Make sure to limit your caffeine intake and drink at least eight glasses of water a day.



It's also helpful to incorporate physical activity. Exercise provides an outlet for the extra anxious energy and stimulates the parts of the brain that keep our stress response in check, as well as those needed for good decision-making and problem solving. Find something physical that you enjoy — walking, biking, yoga, whatever works for you — and do it.

**Intentionally limit news and social media.** Avoid becoming overwhelmed by the difficult news around us. Plan ahead and set priorities and don't be afraid to say "no" to something that isn't a priority. Set realistic daily goals and then pay attention and be positive when you meet them.



Catch yourself if you fall into all-or-nothing thinking ("I always make the wrong decision," or "I never can get anyone to help me") and replace those thoughts by remembering times you have successfully solved complex problems and received support.

**Maintain a strong social network for your emotional well-being.** Family, friends and community groups are some of the best protectors against toxic stress. But you have to reach out to people and talk to them in order for them to support you.

It is OK to tell someone you trust that you're struggling. Talking to your family doctor or faith leader can also be helpful. If you are feeling depressed or anxious and it is keeping you from functioning, find a counselor to help. If you don't know how to find one, contact the Georgia Crisis and Access Line at 1-800-715-4225. It is free and confidential.

Remember, even while we can't control what is happening in the world, we can control how we respond to it. We can keep ourselves as resilient and as healthy as possible, so that we can take care of ourselves and our loved ones. You're important — the world needs you, and you deserve to take care of yourself.

To read the full story, visit [t.uga.edu/5Sq](https://t.uga.edu/5Sq).

## AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

### Growing vegetables at home

Robert Westerfield  
 UGA Extension horticulturist, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences



While adults and children spend more time at home as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, planting a garden or container garden is a great activity to plan together. It's outside, active, educational and edible. With some grocery stores taking longer than usual to stock some items, vegetable gardening is a great way to keep your refrigerator stocked.

For those who have never considered growing their own vegetables, the task may seem daunting, but it's actually a very simple process.

Vegetables need soil, sunlight, moisture and fertility. Any location in your landscape that receives at least six hours of sunlight could be a good location for growing your crop. The amount of space you have available will dictate the size of your garden. Even very small gardens can produce a surprising quantity of vegetables and easily feed a family of four or more.

I would suggest purchasing transplants of tomatoes, peppers and eggplants. These crops do not establish easily if planted directly into the garden from seed. Other vegetables, such as squash, corn, cucumbers, beans, okra and melons, can be directly seeded into the garden with excellent success.

For additional gardening information, visit [extension.uga.edu/publications](https://extension.uga.edu/publications) to view numerous related publications. Search the topics for a specific variety you are interested in growing, such as corn, beans, squash, okra, etc. Other suggested publications include:

- Home Gardening ([Bulletin 577](#))
- Vegetable Gardening in Georgia ([Circular 963](#))
- Vegetable Garden Calendar ([Circular 943](#))
- Weed Control Options for the Home Vegetable Gardener ([Circular 1144](#))
- Raised Beds vs. In-Ground Gardens ([Circular 1027-3](#))
- Growing Vegetables Organically ([Bulletin 1011](#))

Read more at [t.uga.edu/5So](https://t.uga.edu/5So).

#### EXTENSION PUBLICATIONS

COVID-19 and Student Loans: [t.uga.edu/5RQ](https://t.uga.edu/5RQ)  
 When Your Income Drops: [t.uga.edu/5BP](https://t.uga.edu/5BP)

#### EVENTS CALENDAR

Many UGA Extension programs and events have gone virtual, and others have been postponed due to social distancing guidelines. To view the latest information on public events, visit [extension.uga.edu/calendar](https://extension.uga.edu/calendar).



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*Our purpose: We translate the science of everyday living for farmers, families and communities to foster a healthy and prosperous Georgia.*