

Civic Engagement (VLGMA)
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Engage in Self-Care

As a home-grown resident of the City of Lynchburg, the opportunity to serve in our local government is truly appreciated. From working at the Lynchburg Regional Juvenile Detention Center over 20 years ago, (I left for a few years to work in the insurance industry) to Foster Care Social Worker, Children's Services Act Coordinator, and the Assistant City Manager, I've had a myriad of experiences with a diverse group of colleagues. All positions have been excellent learning tools that helped broaden my scope of public-administration knowledge.

Finding our way in public service can seem daunting, especially as we navigate COVID-19, civil unrest, and personal obligations. Every team should include players who share responsibilities and are able to focus on a specific goal. To that end, our mental, physical and spiritual health are factors that matter to a successful organization. All components transcend individual preferences, cultural differences, and social constructs.

In localities throughout the Commonwealth, we are administering thousands of COVID-19 vaccines in an unprecedented fashion. The required collaboration between government, health districts, private entities and residents is extremely taxing. We all have prioritized recipients, managed schedules, found appropriate locations and fielded concerns from citizens. The effort speaks to the crux of Civic Engagement and the collective partnerships set on protecting public health. This work can also be a source of anguish and strain on occasion.

Before takeoff, the flight attendant directs passengers to place their own oxygen mask on prior to helping another passenger do the same. Take this guidance as a reminder to reflect on your personal growth and practice self-care in whatever manner is beneficial for your circumstance. It has been shown that just five minutes of deep breathing, relaxation and meditation may result in less stress and help to overcome anxiety. Of course, just like physical exercise, devoting thirty minutes per day to mental relief is optimal!

These suggestions are easy to implement, yet difficult to perform habitually. Help your VLGMA colleagues and residents foster a culture that supports self-care, appreciates the grind of public service, and champions equity in civic engagement.

Peace