Taking Care of Our Collective Mental Health: Focusing on Family Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Presentation Overview

- Foundations of Health and Wellbeing
  - Issues of Health Equity
- Coping during times of extreme stress
  - Maintaining practices AND making adjustments
- Working with Families
  - Self, children, partners
  - Family dynamics
- Age and Developmental coping skills
  - Sticking to the basics with a few “tweaks”
- Resources
SAMHSA’S Eight Dimensions of Wellness

https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Learn-the-Eight-Dimensions-of-Wellness-Poster-/SMA16-4953
Health vs. Wellness/Wellbeing

**Health**
- Static state of being
- Physical health
- Diseases/Illness
- Genetics
- Tends to be more of a dichotomy

**Wellness/Wellbeing**
- Ongoing state of being
- Multiple dimensions
- Behaviors and practices
- Harmony between various aspects of your being
- Spectrum
COVID-19 Pandemic

• “Out of the blue”
• Immediate threat
  – Prolonged
  – Rapidly changing
  – Many unknowns
• Uncertainty
• Loss of routines
• Colliding of worlds
• No end date
• Expectation and need of “moving forward”
YOUR CONCERNS ARE VALID

There are many reasons that you might be concerned or worried about COVID-19. Some of the most common are:

- Getting sick
- Passing the virus onto others, especially those that are high-risk
- Adjusting to a new reality for an uncertain amount of time
- Taking care of and supporting your family
- Concern about the health of your friends and family
- Financial stress
- Not being able connect with friends and family the way you’re used to
- Shortages of certain common supplies
What is Stress?

**POSITIVE**

Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

**TOLERABLE**

Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

**TOXIC**

Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.

Stress versus Anxiety

• Stress = response to an external factor

• Anxiety = internal persistent feeling of apprehension or dread

The coronavirus (COVID-19) is producing stress while also magnifying anxiety for many of us.

Source: MENTALHEALTHFIRSTAID.ORG
Stress/Anxiety Impacts on our Health and Wellbeing

**Health**
- Increase production of stress hormones
- Exacerbate pre-existing conditions
- Discourage or interrupt health maintenance programs
- Introduce valid concerns over new illness

**Wellness/Wellbeing**
- Disrupt our usual self-care routines
- Adoption/Resorting back to “not so healthy” coping skills
- Increase isolation
- Decrease presence and mindfulness
- Make us feel disconnected from all aspects of ourselves
Behavioral Signs of Stress and Anxiety by Age

- **Infants and Babies** - difference is sleeping and eating behaviors

- **Toddlers and Preschoolers** – regression of behavioral milestones

- **School Aged Kids** – behavioral changes impulse control, “bouncing off the walls”, trouble focusing

- **Adolescents and Teens** – increased risk-taking, irritability, withdrawing

- **Adults** – ALL OF THE ABOVE
Physical Signs of Stress and Anxiety

**SIGNS OF ANXIETY**

It is normal to be worried and stressed during times of crisis. While worry is a part of anxiety, people with anxiety tend to experience more exaggerated feelings of worry and tension. Some common symptoms include:

- **Uncontrollable worry or dread**
- **Stomach and digestion problems**
- **Trouble with concentration, memory, or thinking clearly**
- **Increased heart rate**
- **Changes in energy and difficulty sleeping**
- **Irritability and/or restlessness**

In extreme cases of anxiety, people may experience a panic attack. Panic attacks are often mistaken for heart attacks at first, but usually go away when people are able to talk to someone else to calm their fears and practice deep breathing.

1. Mental Health America 2020 Toolkit
Magnifying Existing Social and Health Inequities

12.9 million US children lived in poverty in 2018. Millions more are in poor families today. They are more likely to experience:
- food insecurity,
- health conditions,
- inadequate housing,
- low quality education and child care,
- mental and behavioral health conditions, and
- ACEs and toxic stress.

1/3 of the poor are children

One in five young children live in poverty, almost twice the rate of adults and more than double that of seniors.

Principles of Population Health and Wellbeing
How can we best show-up for our clients and ourselves during this pandemic?
Learn to drink as you pour, so the spiritual heart cannot run dry and you always have love to give.

Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati
Attending to all components of our wellbeing
# REALIZE WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

One of the most frustrating things about COVID-19 is that so much about the virus and the limitations on where you can go are out of your control. However, there are things that you can control, and focusing on those things can provide you with some comfort. Some of the things you can control include:

## YOUR MIND AND BODY
- Keep a healthy diet
- Exercise at home
- Get enough sleep
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol excessively
- Take care of your mental health
- Maintain self-care and personal hygiene

## YOUR IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT
- Your house, your bedroom, your closet, your kitchen – now is the time to clean and get organized
- Make responsible choices about when to leave the house and only go out if necessary
- Limit the number of people you come into contact with
- Work from home if you are able to

## WHAT YOU CONSUME
- Don’t overdo your news and information intake
- Get your information from reliable sources like the CDC or WHO
- Watch TV, movies, and videos that make you feel good

## HOW YOU PREPARE
- Keep 2-4 weeks of food on hand
- Avoid overstocking on supplies that are in high demand so other people can have enough of the essentials too
- If you take medication, get refills and keep a month’s supply at home if possible

## HOW YOU PROTECT YOURSELF
- Regularly wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Avoid greeting people by shaking hands, kissing or hugging
- Keep 6 feet of distance between you and anyone who is coughing or sneezing

## HOW YOU PROTECT OTHERS
- Stay home if you are sick aside from getting medical care
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces
Staying Connected through Being Creative

• Showing up for clients and families

• Managing uncertainty

• Providing support while you are also needing support

• Heading off burnout

• Dealing with uncomfortable feelings
Modeling Self-Care and Stress Management

- Parents and providers are models of behavior

- Others align with and repeat behaviors of those around them

- Practice and reinforce behaviors we want to see in our clients, children, partners
Taking Pride in Your Role

• As public health we work for health equity, social justice in all of its forms

• Knowing limitations

• Redefining expectations

• Resisting ”rescuing”

• Maintaining and passing along hope
Staying Informed

• Use trusted sources

• Be aware of and follow county and state orders, best practice guidelines, social distancing, cloth face coverings, etc.

• Share information with others

• Correct misinformation or rumors with education of facts

• Speak honestly about “unknowns”
Trusted COVID-19 Sources

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
  [Website Link]

- California Department of Public Health
  [Website Link]

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  [Website Link]
Media Boundary Setting

• Consume media appropriately for your needs

• Be aware of “overconsumption” signs for you and your family
  – “Losing time”
  – Repetitive
  – Opinion and commentary or facts
  – Time of day

• Set boundaries with others regarding talk about the virus, misinformation, etc.
Talking about COVID-19

• In the workplace
  – Voice your concerns, ask for clarifications
  – Suggest improvements or solutions
  – Seek out support and collaboration

• For yourself
  – Find trusted sources to share/process your feelings
  – Journal, meditate or pray

• With children
  – Talk about what is happening
  – Provide facts and answer questions
  – Reassure them
Steps to help kids reduce their stress

• Keep kids connected to their networks
  – Virtual playdates
  – Letters and cards
  – Keep up with activities and hobbies

• Build and keep family routines
  – Basic needs
  – Work
  – Play
# Daily Wellness Tips

4 simple tips that will allow you to experience a peaceful day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check-In</th>
<th>Breathe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start your day by checking in with yourself. Determine your needs and listen to your body. You get to decide your pace for the day and what routine will make the most sense.</td>
<td>Take five deep breaths. You can always return to your breath when things seem confusing, scary, stressful, or when you feel yourself uncertain or needing to be more grounded.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Gratitude</th>
<th>Be Kind</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>List 3-5 things that you are grateful for each day. Doing so will lift your spirit and allow your energy to shift towards more positive news.</td>
<td>Don’t judge how you’re coping or how others are coping. There is no right or wrong way to feel right now. Allow yourself to feel all of your feelings and grant yourself the space to process anything that comes up for you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Working and learning from home

Environment

Routines with flexibility

Setting Boundaries

Check-ins with self and others
MOVEMENT

GOAL: connect with your body

- Walking/running/hiking
- Yoga
- Breathwork
- Stretching
- Dancing
- Biking

* No team or group sports at this time
Online movement resources

The Tree South LA [https://www.thetreesouthla.org](https://www.thetreesouthla.org)
- Online yoga sessions livestreamed on Instagram
  - Multiple classes throughout the day
  - Family focused sessions

YouTube.com videos
- Dance, yoga and stretching videos
- Videos for kids and family

UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC)
[https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/](https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/)
free mindfulness and meditation recordings, exercises and information
ART and CREATIVITY

GOAL: expression

- Virtual art classes
- Online tours of museums
- Journaling and writing exercises
- Mandalas and adult coloring books
- Knitting, crochet or sewing
- Music (playing, listening, writing)
ART and CREATIVITY online resources

A Window Between Worlds
https://awbw.org

Virtual Museum Tours
https://artsandculture.google.com/partner?hl=en

LA County Library online access
https://lacountylibrary.org/audiobooks/

Inventory of Online Art Therapy Exercises
https://www.expressiveartworkshops.com/expres
sive-art-resources/100-art-therapy-exercises/
Faith, Gratitude and Spiritual Connection

GOAL: connection, support, fellowship

- Livestream church, prayer and meditation sessions
- Adopt/renew a daily gratitude practice
- Connect with others outside of your immediate household
- Attend virtual support groups, talking circles
- Reach out to phone, text and chat lines for support
Faith, Gratitude and Spiritual online resources

• Online faith services
• Numerous 12-step meetings are online lacoaa.org
• National Alliance on Mental Illness nami.org
• TeenLine talk, text or chat teenlineonline.org
• UC Berkeley Greater Good Science Center ggsc.Berkeley.edu
• National Parent Helpline 1-855-427-2736 nationalparenthelpline.org
Nature and Environment

Fresh Air

Open the window, open the door, take a walk around your neighborhood. Allow the fresh air to embrace you and rejuvenate your day. Take an intentional moment as often as you need to and allow yourself to connect with the outside world in some capacity. Of course, be mindful of physical distancing.
Nature and Environment online resources

• Zoo live cams https://zoo.sandiegozoo.org/live-cams
• Virtual tours of national parks https://www.nps.gov/subjects/watchingwildlife/webcams.htm

• Get some fresh air every day
• Social media sharing video of hikes, walks, etc.
• Feel the sun
• Listen to birds, wind, etc.
• Star gazing
Nutrition

• Maintaining regular meal schedules

• Recipe sharing and experimentation

• Family cooking “assignments”, meal planning

• Virtual shared meals

➢ Acknowledging fears and worries around food insecurity

➢ Emotional responses to food, eating, and body image, alcohol and other substances
Nutrition online resources

• Online cooking “classes”
• Recipe apps, swaps, etc.

• LAUSD and many school districts meal programs
  [https://achieve.lausd.net/resources 213-443-1300](https://achieve.lausd.net/resources 213-443-1300)
• LACOE [https://www.lacoe.edu/Home/Health-and-Safety/Coronavirus-Resources](https://www.lacoe.edu/Home/Health-and-Safety/Coronavirus-Resources)
• Local food banks [https://www.lafoodbank.org](https://www.lafoodbank.org)
• Faith based food pantries, grocery vouchers, meal delivery, etc.

• NEDA [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org) 800-931-2237
10 TIPS FOR BETTER SLEEP

1. Establish a regular bedtime and waking time.
2. Allow yourself to take a nap if you’re tired.
3. Adjust to a healthier lifestyle regarding your substance use.
4. Create a caffeine cut-off time.
5. Change up your bedtime snack.
6. Watch your workout routine.
7. Use comfortable, inviting bedding.
8. Find a comfortable sleep temperature setting and keep the room well ventilated.
9. Block out all distracting noise and eliminate as much light as possible.
10. Reserve your bed for sleep and sex, avoiding its use for work or general recreation.
Play and Free Time

- Foster independence and autonomy
- Develop choice and decision making
- Teach ownership and accountability
- Prioritize connection to self
- Cultivate joy
Attending to Relationships

• **Self** – give yourself something each day (10-15 minutes)

• **Colleagues** – have patience, connect beyond just work

• **Partner/spouse** – find a way to connect each day

• **Children** – support, share concerns, hold boundaries for self, also ask for help from other family members, older siblings, grandparents and aunts/uncles

• **Parents** - support, share concerns, hold boundaries for self, remember your limitations
Managing Anxiety

MANAGING ANXIETY

There are small things that everyone can do while practicing social distancing or self-quarantine to help reduce the amount of anxiety they are experiencing.

- Ask someone to be your support buddy. Call, text, or video chat as needed.
- Exercise at home
- Use resources like online support groups or the Crisis Text Line (Text MHA to 741741)
- Set boundaries with your phone
- Use a mindfulness or meditation app
- Set a timer for every hour to get up and stretch or take a walk
- Create a new routine
- Take 10 deep breaths when you feel stressed
Grounding Yourself When Anxiety Hits

Employ your senses!

• Positive statements/affirmations
• Visualizing a safe or comforting space, time, experience
• Making contact with the ground, feet on floor, tapping, etc.
• Smell something comforting (candle, oils, perfume, flowers, etc.)
• Drink a hot or cold beverage

• Reach out for support and connect with others!
Signs of Depression

• Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
• Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities
• Decreased energy or fatigue
• Moving or talking more slowly
• Feeling restless or having trouble sitting still
• Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions

• Difficulty sleeping, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
• Appetite and/or weight changes
• Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts
• Aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems without a clear physical cause and/or that do not ease even with treatment

National Institute of Mental Health  https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml#part_145397
Addressing symptoms of depression

Maintain regular routines

- Sleep
- Hydration
- Movement
- Nutrition
- Connection
- Medications/Vitamins

Reach out for support

- Trusted family, friends and colleagues
- Faith leaders
- Hotlines
- Online support groups
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255

Remember you are not alone, we are all in this together!
Reaching outside of ourselves

How can you be of service to –

- Family, friends, loved ones?
- Colleagues and peers?
- Neighborhood?
- Community?
- Larger society?
- Online presence?
We-Care…looking after one another

Support each other through -

• Gratitude
• Appreciation
• Connection
• Encouragement
• Celebrations
• Recognition of challenges

1.http://www.wendtcenter.org/resources/for-professionals/
Take-Aways…

• **COMFORT** – what can you do in the moment to feel a sense of comfort

• **COMPASSION** – for yourself and others

• **CONNECTION** – with others, self, nature

• **CONSISTENCY** – what can you do on a regular basis
LA County Resources

- LA County Employee Assistance Program  (213) 738-4200
- LA County Department of Mental Health Access Line
  1-800–854-7771 (24/7)
- LA County Department of Mental Health Warm Line (non-urgent)
  **English:** 1 (855) 952-9276 **Español:** 1 (888) 448-4055
- LA County Community Resources Information Line 2-1-1
- LA County DV Hotline 800-978-3600
- LA County Department of Social Services 866-613-3777
- LA County Child Abuse Hotline 800-540-4000
- LA County Elder Abuse Hotline 877-477-3646
- LA County Substance Abuse Service Helpline 1-844-804-7500 (24/7)
Family Support, Referral and Information Hotlines

• NAMI HelpLine: 1-800-950-NAMI
• National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
• National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673
• Trans Lifeline: 877-565-8860
• SAMHSA Treatment Referral Hotline: 1-877-726-4727
• National Parent Helpline: 1-855-427-2736
• CA Peer-Run Warm Line: 855-845-7415 non-emergency support
Mental Health Support Hotlines

• **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (24/7):** 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
  – Veterans: press 1 or text 838255
  – Para español, oprima el numero 2
  – **Crisis Text Line (24/7):** Text LA to 741741

• **National Alliance for Mental Illness:** 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
  - Text NAMI to 741741

• **TeenLine:** 310-855-4673 (6 p.m. to 10 p.m. daily)
  – Text TEEN to 839863 (6 p.m. to 9 p.m. daily)

• **The Trevor Project for LGBTQ Youth (24/7):** 1-866-488-7386
  – Text START to 678678
Additional Online Child/Parenting Resources

• LA County Office of Education https://www.lacoe.edu
• First 5 LA https://www.first5la.org
• CA ACEs Aware Initiative https://www.acesaware.org
• National Association of School Psychologists https://www.nasponline.org
• Children’s National Mental Health Network https://www.cmhnetwork.org
• National Child Traumatic Stress Network https://www.nctsn.org
• Child Mind Institute https://childmind.org
• Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University https://developingchild.harvard.edu
• Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine https://www.adolescenthealth.org
• Echo Training https://www.echotraining.org
• American Psychological Association https://www.apa.org/monitor/2018/04/parenting-resources
Additional Online Health Resources

• **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** - basic guidance on managing mental health stressors during COVID-19.  

• **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** - information for clinicians, treatment providers and consumers.  
  https://www.samhsa.gov/coronavirus

• **World Health Organization (WHO)** - contains suggestions for coping with COVID-19 for the general population and specific groups including health care workers, caretakers of children and older adults, and people living in isolation.  
  https://www.who.int

• **Each Mind Matters** - https://www.eachmindmatters.org/action-items/covid19update/
QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US TODAY!

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS PLEASE CALL THE LA COUNTY, MATERNAL, CHILD AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH PROGRAM at 213-639-6400