



MANAGING ANXIETY AND GRIEF IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: IN SERVICE OF FAMILIES

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We are affected



A Tsunami of Death



Race and COVID-19

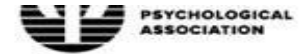


Stress and Anxiety



Psychological Effects of a Global Pandemic

Significant increase in stress related to Economy and Work during pandemic



Note: "Work" is among those who are employed

Parenting

Parental sources of stress as a result of the coronavirus pandemic



% reporting very/somewhat significant source of stress in their life

A family member getting coronavirus

74%

Government response to coronavirus

74%

Disrupted routines/adjusting to new routines

74%

Getting coronavirus

73%

Managing distance/online learning for their child(ren)

71%

Basic needs (i.e., availability of and access to food, housing)

70%

Self-isolation

67%

Access to health care services

66%

Missing out on major milestones

63%

Stress about Government handling the crisis

Government response to coronavirus as a source of stress



Nearly 7 in 10 Americans (67%) say the government response to coronavirus is a significant source of stress in their life.

The Context of Dying During COVID-19

- ▣ Shocking and unanticipated death
- ▣ Isolation of family from the dying and from supports
- ▣ High anxiety and helplessness – fragmented caregiving and attachment bonds
- ▣ Existential crisis – *Where is God now?* Loss of religious community and important rituals
- ▣ Profound loss of meaning
- ▣ Disproportionate loss within minority communities
- ▣ Overwhelmed medical systems void of family supporters as a key role in care

What is “Normal” Grief?

- ▣ Emotional
- ▣ Behavioral
- ▣ Physical
 - ▣ Abnormal symptoms such as use of drugs, alcohol, violence, and suicidality warrant reaching out for professional help.
- ▣ Duration varies from person to person.
- ▣ Research shows that the average recovery time is 18-24 months.
- ▣ Grief reactions can be stronger around significant dates, e.g., death anniversaries, birthdays, and holidays

What is “*Prolonged Grief*”?

- ICD-10 Criteria:

- Death of a close person
- Persistent and pervasive grief response accompanied by longing for or preoccupation with deceased
- Intense emotional pain (sadness, guilt, anger, denial, blame, loss of sense of self, absence of positive mood, numbness, avoidance of social and other activities)
- Minimum of 6 months after death, exceeding social, cultural and religious norms
- Significant impairment in personal, familial, social, occupational or other functioning

A Public Health Crisis

- We are grieving in isolation
- A spike in COVID-19-related prolonged and complicated grief is a potential public health crisis
- Urgency in the need for timely access to mental health services
- Opportunity to think creatively about bereavement efforts
 - We have learned from previous epidemics – e.g., Ebola in Congo
 - Funerals are being live-streamed
 - Physicians and chaplains use speaker and video chat functions to allow families to say goodbye to a critically ill loved one and to deliver last rites
 - A new era of “e-mourning”

Where to go next?



What can we do to effectively manage our stress?

- ▣ **F** = Focus on what's in your control
- ▣ **A** = Acknowledge your thoughts & Feelings
- ▣ **C** = Come back to your body
- ▣ **E** = Engage in what you're doing
- ▣ **C** = Committed action
- ▣ **O** = Opening Up
- ▣ **V** = Values
- ▣ **I** = Identify resources
- ▣ **D** = Disinfect & distance

F = Focus on what's in your control

- ▣ Fear and anxiety are a normal, natural response to challenging situations infused with danger and uncertainty.
- ▣ The more we focus on what's not in our control, the more hopeless or anxious we're likely to feel.
- ▣ Most useful thing anyone can do in any type of crisis: FOCUS ON WHAT'S IN YOUR CONTROL
- ▣ Here and Now
 - ▣ Our Inner and Outer worlds

ACE Formula

- ▣ A = Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings
- ▣ C = Come back into your body
- ▣ E = Engage in what you're doing



A = Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings



C = Come back into your body

- ▣ Slowly pushing your feet hard into the floor.
- ▣ Slowing straightening up your back and spine; if sitting, sitting upright and forward in your chair.
- ▣ Slowly pressing your fingertips together.
- ▣ Slowly stretching your arms or neck, shrugging your shoulders.
- ▣ Slowly breathing.

E = Engage in what you're doing

- ▣ Look around the room and notice 5 things you can see.
- ▣ Notice 3 or 4 things you can hear.
- ▣ Notice what you are doing now.
- ▣ End the exercise by giving your full attention to the task at activity at hand.

Dropping Anchor is a VERY useful skill

- Useful for handling difficult thoughts, feelings, emotions, memories, urges and sensations more effectively;
- Helps switch off auto-pilot and to engage in your life;
- Helps with grounding and steadying yourself in difficult situations;
- Disrupts rumination, obsessing and worrying;
- Focuses your attention on the task or activity you're doing.

C = Committed Action



C = Committed Action

- ▣ What are the simpler ways to look after yourself, those you live with, and those you can realistically help?
- ▣ What kind, caring, supportive deeds can you do?
- ▣ Can you say some kind words to someone in distress – in person or via a phone call or text message?
- ▣ Can you help someone with a task or a chore, or cook a meal, or hold someone's hand, or play a game with a young child?
- ▣ Can you comfort and soothe some who is sick?

O = Opening Up



V = Values

- ▣ What do you want to stand for in the face of this crisis?
- ▣ What sort of person do you want to be, as you go through this?
- ▣ How do you want to treat yourself and others?
- ▣ What can you say and do that will enable you to look back in years to come and feel proud of your response?

I = Identify Resources

- ▣ Identify resources for help, assistance, support, and advice.
- ▣ **National Consumer Voice** – an excellent resource!
- ▣ One important aspect of this process involves finding a reliable and trustworthy source of information for updates and guidelines.
 - ▣ World Health Organization
 - ▣ CMS
 - ▣ NORC

D = Disinfect & Distance Physically

- ▣ Can't say it enough:
 - ▣ Disinfect your hands regularly
 - ▣ Practice social distancing, as realistically as possible
- ▣ **Physical distancing does not mean cutting off emotionally.**
- ▣ These actions are truly caring in nature.
 - ▣ Remember the Golden Rule!

In Summary

- ▣ **F** = Focus on what's in your control
- ▣ **A** = Acknowledge your thoughts & Feelings
- ▣ **C** = Come back to your body
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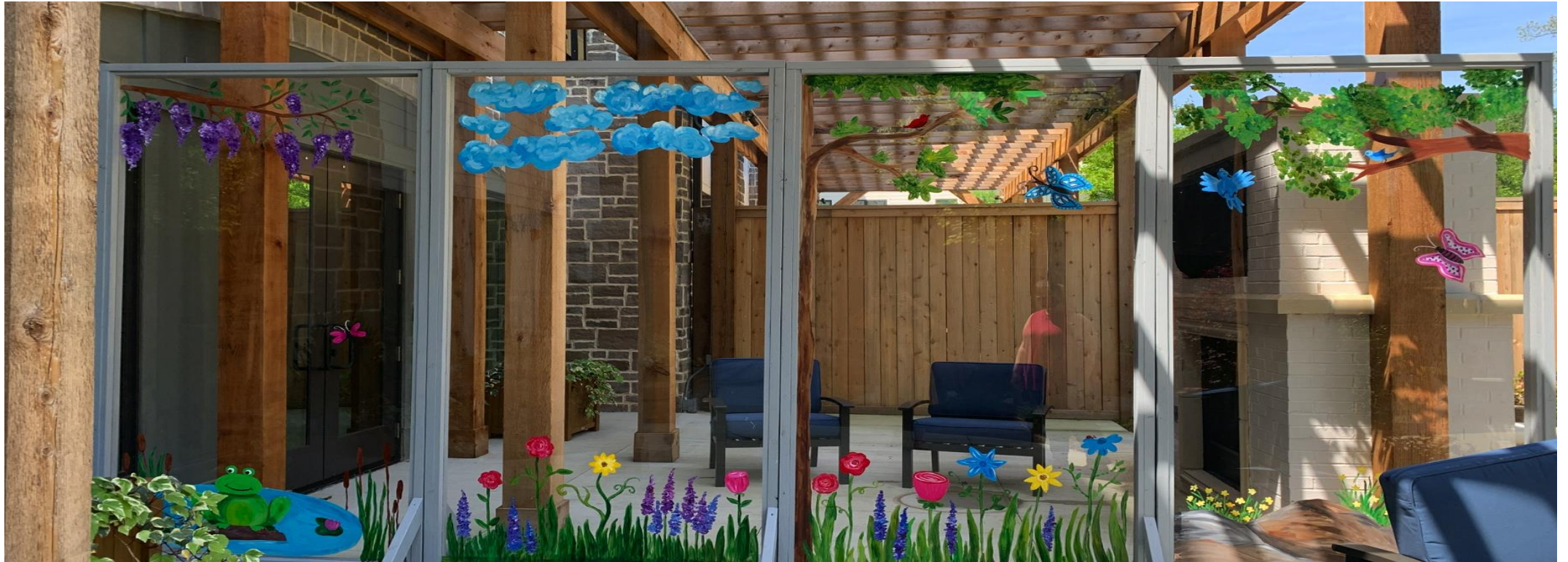
Giving Yourself Time to Grieve

- ▣ Find supportive people to reach out to during your grief.
- ▣ Take care of your health.
- ▣ Postpone major life changes.
- ▣ Consider keeping a journal.
- ▣ Participate in activities.
- ▣ Find a way to memorialize ones who have died.
- ▣ Consider joining a grief-support group or contacting a grief counselor for additional support and help. Utilize your EAP benefits.

Loss is Multifaceted

- ▣ And so is grief.
- ▣ There is no “one size fits all” – my process will be different from your process, and so on.
- ▣ Give yourself and others permission to bereave the loss, and hold no expectations for the duration of how it should look and feel.

We are CREATIVE & RESILIENT



Thank YOU



Grief Resources

- ▣ The Portland Institute for Loss and Transition
 - ▣ www.portlandinstitute.org
- ▣ Moore, B. (2020). Dying during Covid-19. *The Hastings Center Report*, pp. 13-15.
- ▣ Neimeyer, R. A. (Ed.) (2012). *Techniques of grief therapy: Creative practices for counseling the bereaved*. New York: Routledge.
- ▣ Silver, R. C. (2020). Surviving the trauma of COVID-19. *Science*, 369 (6499), pp 11, doi: 10.1126/science.abd5396.
- ▣ Thompson, B. E. & Neimeyer, R. A. (Eds.) (2014). *Grief and the expressive arts: Practices for creating meaning*. New York: Routledge.
- ▣ Verdery, A. M. & Smith-Greenway, E. (2020). COVID-19 and family bereavement in the United States. *Applied Demography Newsletter*, 32, 1-2.

Anxiety Resources

- ▣ Helpful/Free Apps
 - ▣ COVID COACH
 - ▣ Headspace
 - ▣ Daily OM
 - ▣ Five Minutes of Gratitude – A daily gratitude journal

RESOURCES

Taking Care of You

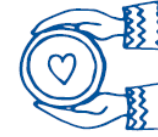
Tips for Family Members and Residents

- Typical reactions to stress
- Self-Care tips
- Creating a Self-Care Plan (family members)
- Ideas for Staying Connected with Your Loved One (family members)

<https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/other-issues-and-resources/covid-19/residents-families>

Taking Care of You

TIPS FOR THE FAMILY CAREGIVER



The Coronavirus (COVID-19) has caused major life disruptions. In our lifetime, we have never dealt with so many variables impacting caregivers, families, employers, and residents of long-term care facilities. As difficult as this pandemic is, it is important for family caregivers to take care of themselves so they can be their best for others. The following information is a reference to emotions you may experience, reminders for practicing self-care, and guidance for seeking assistance.

TYPICAL REACTIONS TO STRESS MAY INCLUDE:

- Anxiety, worry, fear
- Concern about being able to care for others
- Frustration, Anger
- Loneliness
- Uncertainty, ambivalence
- Sadness
- Feelings of grief
- Desire to use alcohol
- Symptoms of depression
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Tips for Self-Care

- The emotions you are feeling during this crisis are normal. Talk to someone how you feel. Seek assistance from a mental health professional for support.
- Take time for you, exercise, take up hobbies, listening to music, read a good movie. Look for opportunities to smile and laugh!
- Stay informed but limit the amount of news you read or listen to daily.
- Eat healthy, stay hydrated, and get 7-8 hours of sleep. Go outside for fresh air.
- If you have concerns regarding household finances due to family member recently unemployed or furloughed, speak with your employer or contact Assistance Program (EAP) regarding leave, benefits, and possible local, state supports. Locate local and regional U.S. Department of Labor programs us

Create a Self-Care Plan

The [USC School of Social Work](#) recommends practicing self-awareness and

- Recognize your stressors and how you respond to them (e.g., trouble sleeping).
- Set time-specific goals for self-care activities (e.g., identify your preferred time how long you will exercise, and where you will exercise).
- Create a self-care plan using specific goals for physical, intellectual, emotional, and social well-being.
- Have accountability for your self-care plan (e.g., meet virtually with co-workers).
- Take advantage of free applications that can be uploaded on electronic devices to help you shake off anxiety or stressors.

Taking Care of You

TIPS FOR RESIDENTS OF LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES



The Coronavirus (COVID-19) has caused major life disruptions. In our lifetime, we have never dealt with so many variables impacting you, our families, and staff of long-term care facilities. Restrictions have been imposed on visitation and daily activities, and there is great concern about stopping the spread of the virus. As difficult as this pandemic is, it is important for you to take care yourself.

This is such a stressful time for everyone. Know that many people are thinking of you! Know also that your caregivers are trying their best to keep you and all other residents safe.

The following information may be helpful to you.

TYPICAL REACTIONS TO STRESS MAY INCLUDE:

- Anxiety, worry, or fear
- Concern about others
- Uncertainty
- Loneliness
- Anger
- Frustration
- Sadness
- Feelings of grief and loss
- Desire to use alcohol or drugs to cope
- Symptoms of depression
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Tips for Self-Care

Anxiety, worry, and fear about your health and well-being and those of family and friends can feel overwhelming. Consider the following ideas:

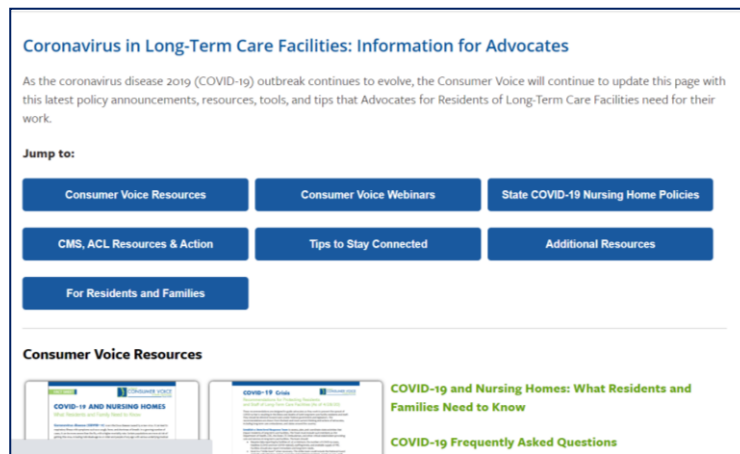
- Call or text family and friends often. If you don't have a phone, ask the facility to provide one so that you may stay in touch with others.
- If you have a smartphone or computer or if one can be loaned to you, hold virtual face-to-face conversations. Ask friends and facility staff for help if you need it.
- Talk with facility staff about options for visitation such as talking by phone while seeing family and friends through a facility window or visiting outdoors in nice weather.
- Write letters, notes, and cards to family, friends, and other residents. Share special memories of your time together. Ask others to do the same.
- If the facility has social media pages such as Facebook, like their page, and post short videos, encouraging words, etc. If the facility doesn't have a Facebook page, ask them to create one so that all interested residents can post messages on the site.



Consumer Voice COVID-19 Information

Information for Advocates

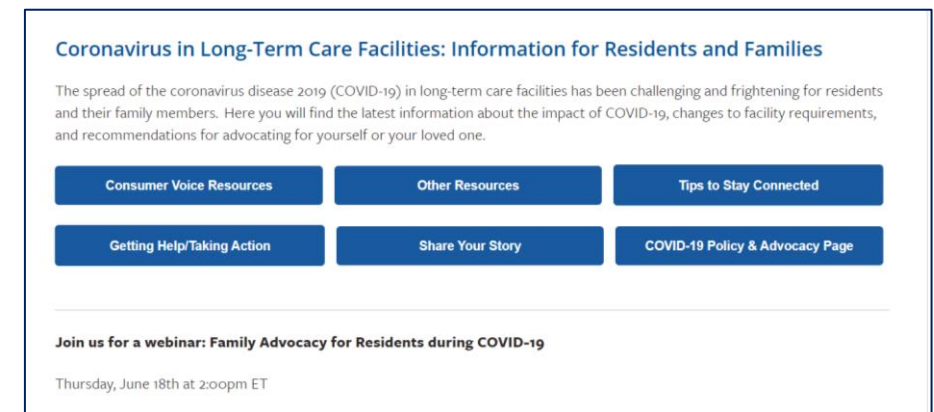
- Fact Sheets
- Weekly Webinars
- Map with State COVID-19 Nursing Home policies



<https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/other-issues-and-resources/covid-19>

Information for Residents and Families

- Tips to Stay Connected
- Get Help/Take Action
- Share Your Story



<https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/other-issues-and-resources/covid-19/residents-families>

Trauma-Informed, Person-Centered Care Resources

- **NORC**

- Trauma-informed care – <https://ltcombudsman.org/issues/trauma-informed-care>
- Person-centered care - <https://ltcombudsman.org/issues/person-centered-care>

- **Consumer Voice**

- Resident-Directed Care/Culture Change <https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/for-advocates/resident-directed-care>
- My Personal Directions for Quality Living - [Blank Form](#) & [Sample](#)
 - A tool from Consumer Voice, with edits by SAGE, for individuals to share what matters to them for person-centered care.
- Information for LTC consumers - <https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/recipients>
- Information for Family Members - <https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/family>

Resources

National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center (NORC)

www.ltcombudsman.org

- Coronavirus Prevention in Long-Term Care Facilities: Information for Ombudsman Programs
https://ltcombudsman.org/omb_support/COVID-19

National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice)

www.theconsumervoice.org

- Coronavirus in Long-Term Care Facilities: Information for Advocates
<https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/other-issues-and-resources/covid-19>
- Coronavirus in Long-Term Care Facilities: Information for Residents and Families
<https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/other-issues-and-resources/covid-19/residents-families>



The National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center

Connect with us:

www.ltcombudsman.org
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The National LTC Ombudsman Resource Center



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