



MANAGING ANXIETY AND GRIEF IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: IN-SERVICE OF DIRECT CARE WORKERS

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We are affected



A Tsunami of Death



Race and COVID-19

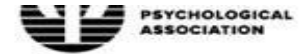


Stress and Anxiety



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

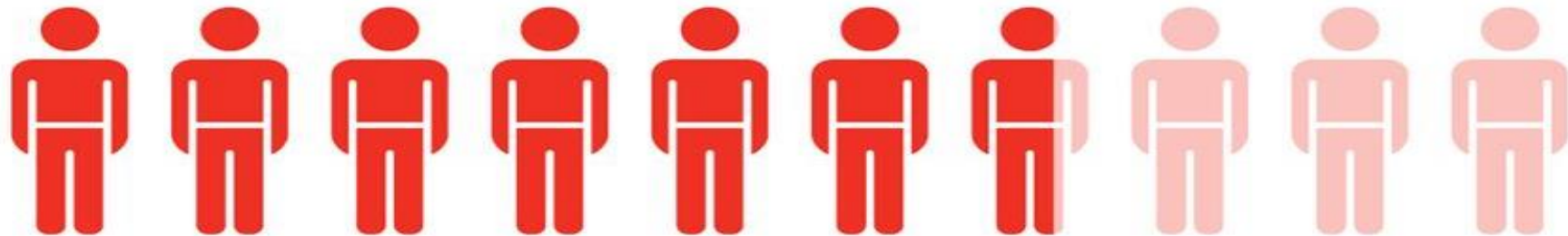
66%

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
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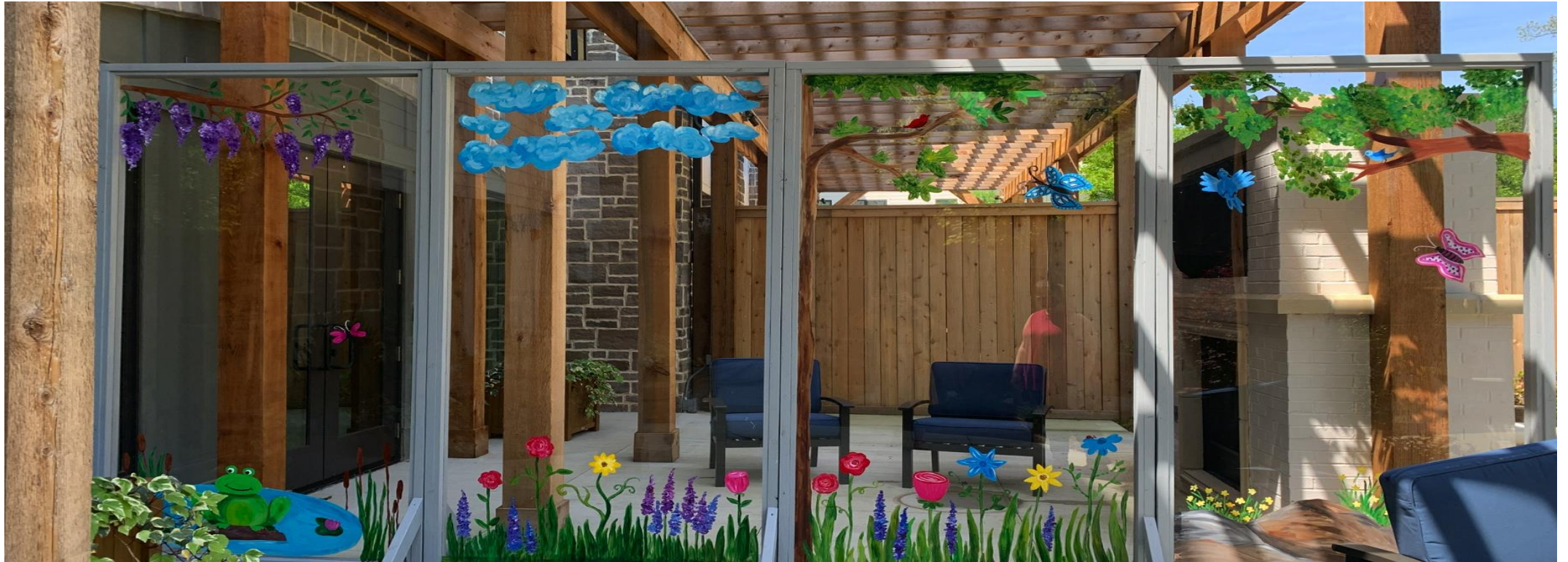
Giving Yourself Time to Grieve

- ▣ 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

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
ombudcenter@theconsumervoice.org



The National LTC Ombudsman Resource Center



@LTCombudcenter



Get our app! Search for "LTC Ombudsman Resource Center" in the Apple Store or Google Play

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