



Grief and Anxiety in the Time of COVID-19

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San Mateo Senior Roundtable

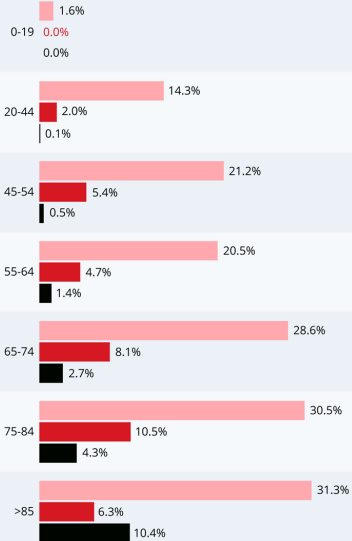
May 13, 2020

What is happening:

How COVID-19 Affects Different U.S. Age Groups

Hospitalization, ICU admission and fatality rates for reported U.S. COVID-19 cases by age group*

■ Hospitalization ■ ICU admission ■ Case fatality



* Based on 2,449 COVID-19 patients with a known age.
(February 12–March 16, 2020).
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

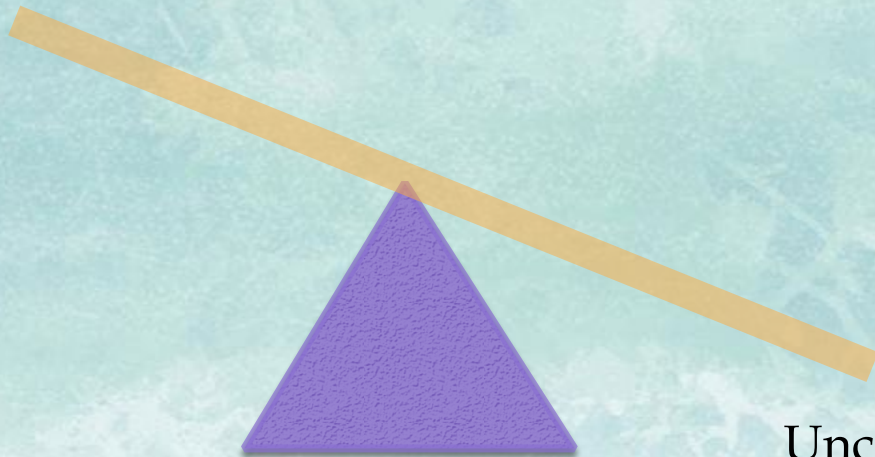


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All Change is a Form of Loss

Predictability
Security
Control



Uncertainty
Anxiety
Relinquish Control

COVID 19 & reactions of nurses and other professional caregivers

- Feelings of being under siege can result in panic attacks, depression, or anxiety
- Fight-or-flight response
- Anticipatory grief, wondering who is next
- Sadness, anger, helplessness; panic attacks; poor sleep, worry, feeling like they have no one to talk to and feeling isolated
- Needing to have control
- Precursors of potential longer-term PTSD

Stress for Caregivers During COVID



Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones



Changes in sleep or eating patterns



Difficulty sleeping or concentrating



Worsening of chronic health problems



Worsening of mental health conditions



Increased use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs

Grief as a Normal Response to...

- The loss of a loved one
- Other types of losses
- Actual, perceived, or expected loss

Anxiety as a Normal Response to...

- Stress
- Anticipation of future threats

Trauma as...

An inescapably stressful event

that overwhelms the existing resources of the individual.

Our Emotions

Need to be named, allowed and acknowledged.

Are like waves in the ocean: they come and go

Crises like this help us change our relationship with emotions

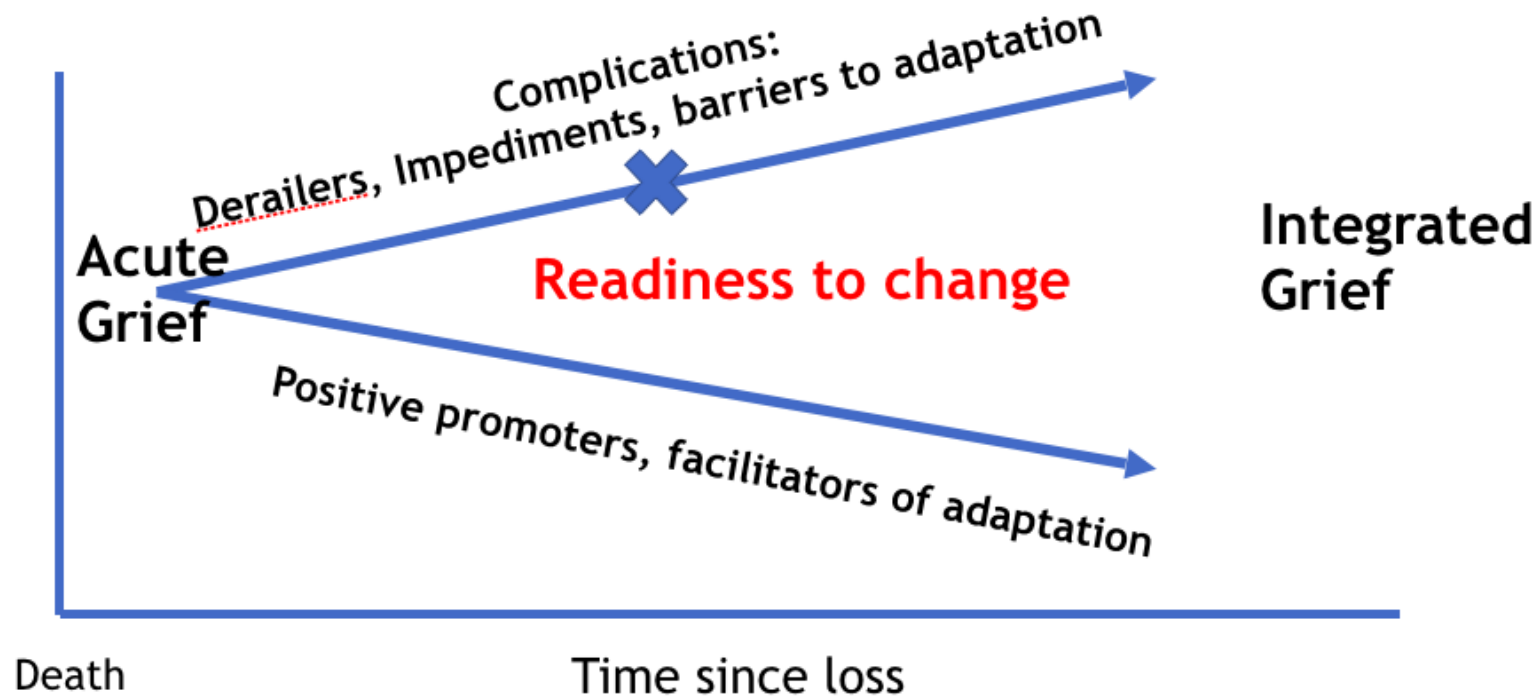
Grief is...

- A mind-body-spirit experience
- An individual process, and we go at our own pace
- Ubiquitous and can be especially challenging in the time of COVID-19
- _____

If you've lost a loved one and are sheltering:

- Intensified yearning, seeking and preoccupation- in times of threat
- Isolation makes grief harder
- Your coping patterns will be amplified
- Touch and connection can offer comfort in grief
- Being home surrounded by reminders can intensify grief
- Rituals are disrupted
- Normative reminders of the reality of the loss are postponed
- COVID risks delayed grief, complicated grief
- Grief can set be set aside

The Grief Process (inspired by Dr. Kathy Shear's model)

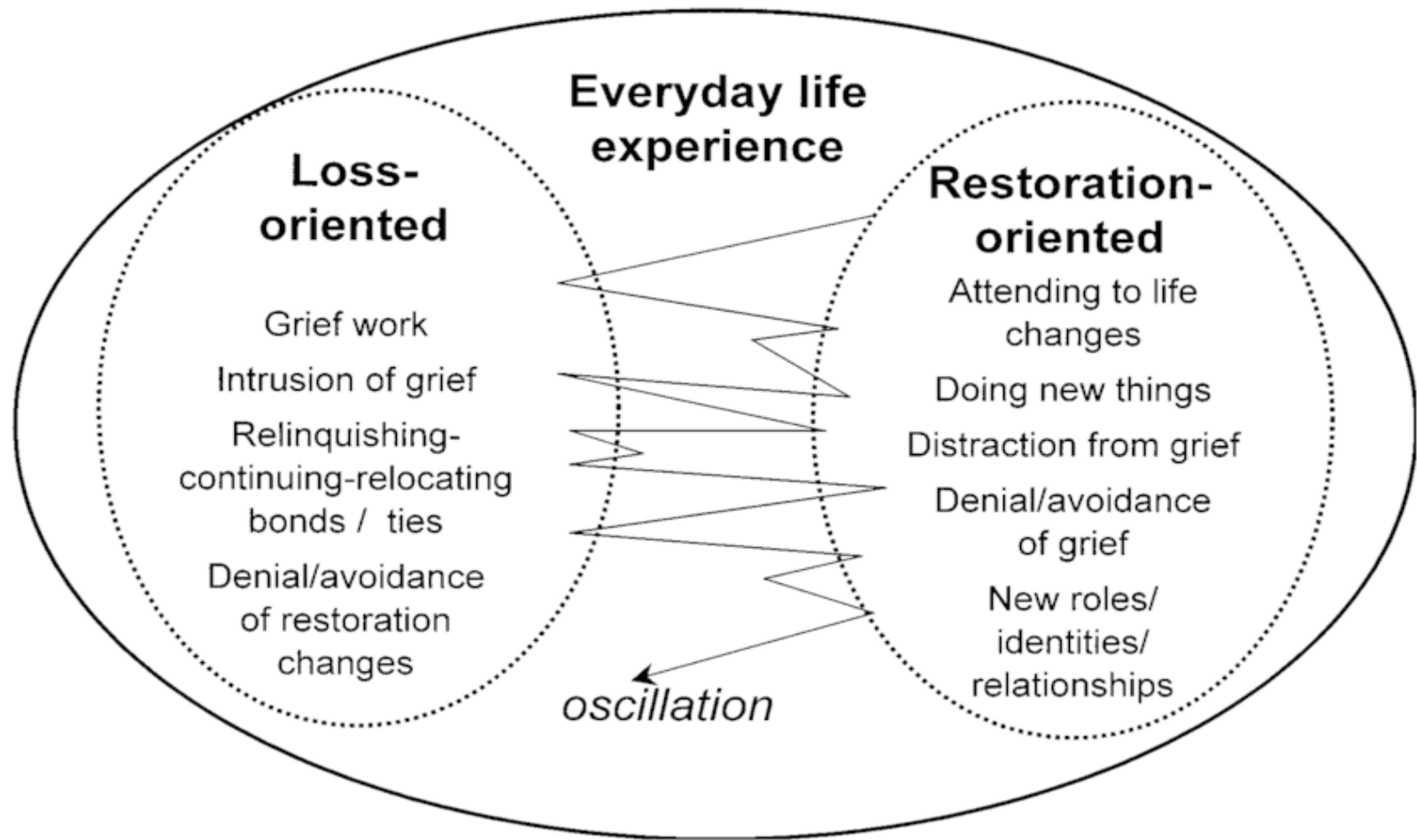


What helps as we adapt to a loss?

- Be patient with yourself.
- Do not compare yourself to others.
- Go through mourning at your own pace.
- Admit you are hurting and be in touch with the pain.
- Ask for and accept help.
- Keep to a routine.
- Schedule activities to help yourself get through weekends and holidays.
- Find someone who needs your help.

What helps as we adapt to a loss? (cont.)

- Introduce pleasant changes into your life.
- Talk to others.
- Know that you will survive.
- Take care of something alive, such as a plant or a pet.
- Curiosity, humor, creativity
- Meaning making
- Practice oscillation; allow for distractions or taking a break from grief



Anxiety in the time of COVID-19



40 % of Americans are anxious about serious illness or death as a result of COVID-19.
59 % of Americans report that COVID-19 is having an effect on their daily lives
36 % of respondents to the poll say that COVID-19 is taking a toll on their mental health.

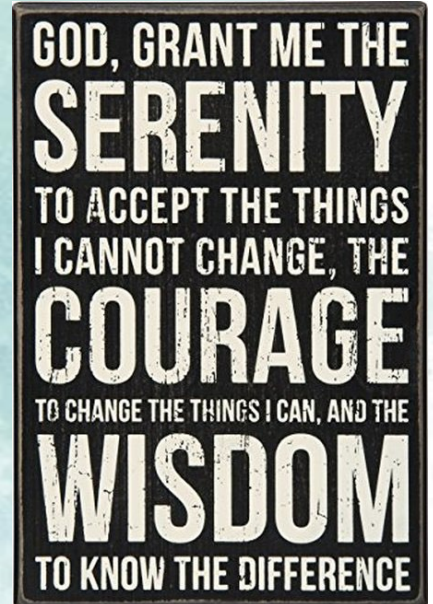
American Psychiatric Association. New Poll: COVID19 Impacting Mental Well-Being: Americans Feeling Anxious, Especially for Loved Ones; Older Adults Are Less Anxious. [published March 25, 2020]. <https://www.psychiatry.org/newsroom/news-releases/new-poll-covid-19-impacting-mental-well-being-americans-feeling-anxious-especially-for-loved-ones-older-adults-are-less-anxious>

Anxiety in the time of COVID-19...

- Worrying about one's own health and the health of loved ones
- Death anxiety
- Concerns around school, work, finances, etc.
- Worrying about an uncertain future
- Doubting one's ability to cope
- Social distancing, and/or social isolation
- Lack of clear, consistent information and guidance
- Too much information and opinion
- _____

What helps in coping with anxiety?

- Gain perspective on anxiety
- Take action according to your specific concerns.
- Be aware of automatic thoughts and challenge them
- Mindfulness: nonjudgmental awareness of what's going on
- Breathing exercises i.e., "Box Breathing"
- Keep to a routine
- Practice self-care activities like art, yoga, a hot bath, etc.
- _____



Trauma in the context of COVID-19...

- Terrifying number of deaths and amount of suffering
- Lives turned upside down
- Fear and threat, feeling “out of body”, disbelief/surreal feeling, re-living are hallmark features
- Collective trauma
- Vicarious trauma
- Cumulative stress
- Triggers of past traumatic events

A-Z OF TRAUMA SYMPTOMS



- A:** Anxiety
- B:** Bottling up emotions
- C:** Change in personality or mood
- D:** Depression
- E:** Eating patterns change (along with drinking/smoking)
- F:** Fatigue
- G:** Guilt, shame or self-blame
- H:** Heartbeat racing
- I:** Insomnia
- J:** Jumpy or being startled easily
- L:** Lack of concentration
- M:** Memory lapse
- N:** Nightmares (along with flashbacks, panic attacks or disturbed sleep)
- O:** Obsessive compulsive behaviours
- P:** Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Q:** Quiet and introverted
- R:** Relationships are suffering
- S:** Shock and stress
- T:** Tension in muscles
- U:** Unusual behaviour such as self-destructive or substance abuse
- V:** Verbal skills deteriorating
- W:** Withdrawn and becoming unsociable

When to seek additional help?

Strategies for Coping with Crisis

- Soothing the Body
- Muscle Relaxation/Deep Breathing
- Monitoring Your Stressors and Your Stress Level
- Thought-Stopping
- Relabeling and Reframing
- Positive Self-Talk
- Positive Imagery
- Challenging Irrational Beliefs
- Restoring Positives/Reducing Negatives
- Developing a Sense of Mastery Through Action

Which two or three of the methods appeal to you the most?

Mental Health Wellness Tips for Quarantine

By: Eileen Feliciano | NYS Psychologist

1. Stick to a routine.
2. Dress for the social life you want, not the social life you have.
3. Get out at least once a day, for at least thirty minutes.
4. Find some time to move each day, again daily for at least thirty minutes.
5. Reach out to others, you guessed it, at least once daily for thirty minutes.
6. Stay hydrated and eat well.
7. Develop a self-care toolkit.
8. Spend extra time playing with children.
9. Give everyone the benefit of the doubt, and a wide berth.
10. Everyone find their own retreat space.
11. Expect behavioral issues in children, and respond gently.
12. Focus on safety and attachment.
13. Lower expectations and practice radical self-acceptance.
14. Limit social media and COVID conversation, especially around children.
15. Notice the good in the world, the helpers.
16. Help others.
17. Find something you can control, and control the heck out of it.
18. Find a long-term project to dive into.
19. Engage in repetitive movements and left-right movements.
20. Find an expressive art and go for it.
21. Find lightness and humor in each day.
22. Reach out for help—your team is there for you.
23. “Chunk” your quarantine, take it moment by moment.
24. Remind yourself daily that this is temporary.
25. Find the lesson.

<http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/my-ssp/mental-health-wellness-tips-quarantine>

Coping with Loneliness & Isolation

- Feeling lonely elicits a response in the form of a survival threat; this increases our stress
- Loneliness reduces our sense of self and self-confidence
- Loneliness makes it harder to cultivate courage

What can help is:

- Making an effort to reach out
- Challenging thoughts that you are truly alone
- Social media, the internet, telephone
- Focusing on others
- Loneliness vs. solitude

A Personal Word About Re-Entry into the World

Got Fear?

- Being in a crowd...
- Traveling...
- Going to the gym...
- Being with kids...
- Flu season, shaking hands, someone coughing...



**Got Faith? A Patient, Slow Process of
Building Trust and Confidence Again
Balance quality of life with quantity
Be Brave...**



Resilience & Post-Traumatic Growth

Resilience is often defined as the capacity to adjust to change, disruption or difficulty, the ability to “bounce back” from tough times.

10 Common Resilience Traits:

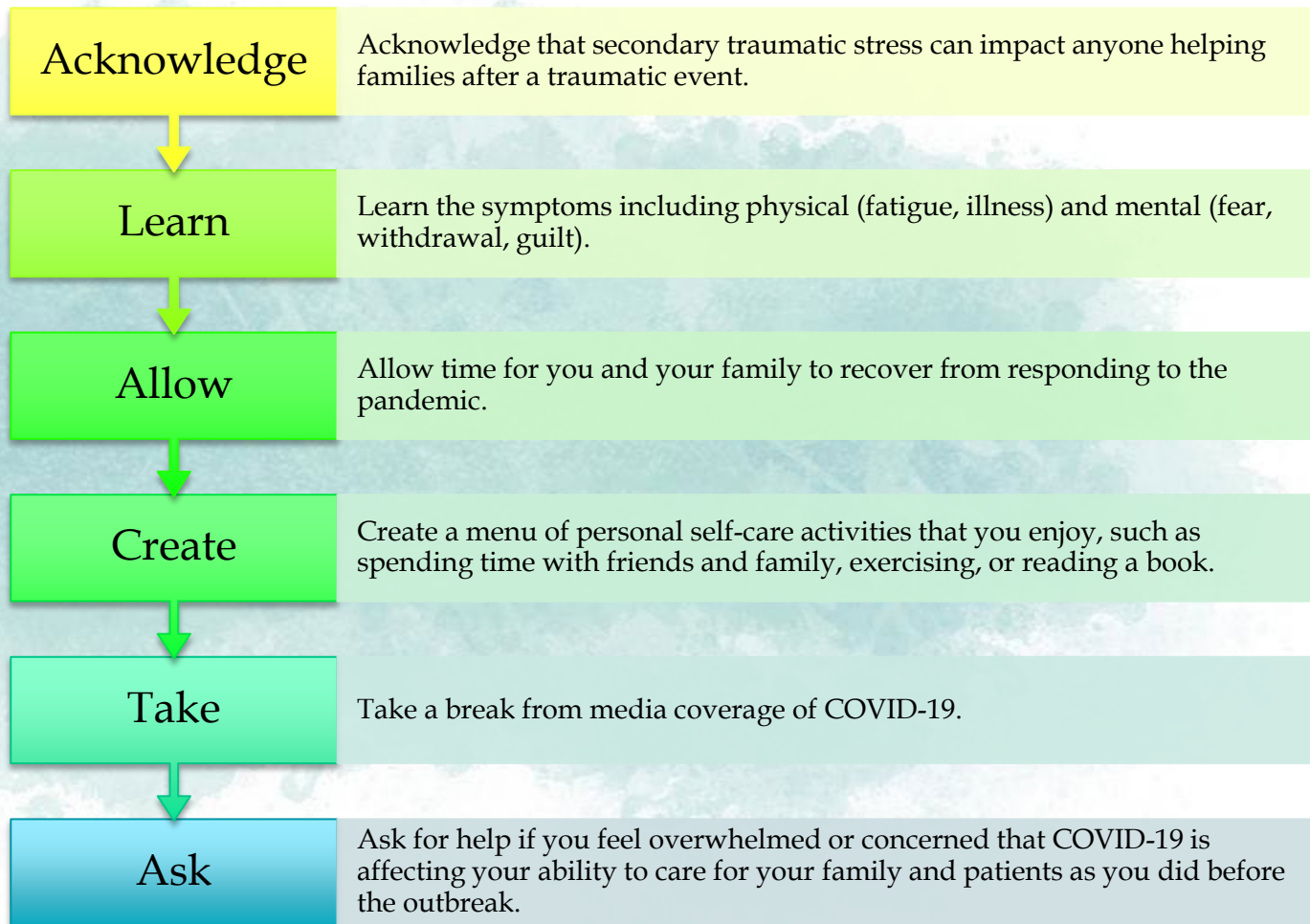
- *Accepts change of part of lie*
- *Positive attitude/optimism*
- *Sense of Purpose*
- *Strong social network*
- *Strong problem solving-skills*
- *Positive self-confidence and self-efficacy*
- *Strong ability to nurture oneself*
- *Sees difficulties in life as challenges*
- *Ability to regulate difficult emotions and thoughts*
- *Capacity to set realistic goals and carry them out*

Resilience & Post-Traumatic Growth

- **Post-traumatic growth** describes the personal transformation in the aftermath of traumatic life events, which allows the individual to find the purpose of pain and to look beyond the struggle.

“People develop new understandings of themselves, the world they live in, how to relate to other people, the kind of future they might have and a better understanding of how to live life,” says psychologist Richard Tedeschi, PhD.

How to reduce secondary traumatic stress reactions (CDC)



In the depths of
winter, I finally
learned that within
me there lay an
invincible summer.

ALBERT CAMUS



*What does this mean
for me?*



Five Minute Relaxation Exercise



Discussion/ Q & A

What are you learning from this experience?

What is a personal belief system or philosophy of life that helps you cope with anxiety and grief?

What gives you a feeling of being fully alive at this time?

What hasn't changed for you?

Final Notes

“Change cannot be avoided... Change provides opportunity for innovation. It gives you the chance to demonstrate your creativity.”

-Keshavan Nair



Thank you for joining us. We wish you wellness.

Resources:

**-Mission Hospice virtual support groups and individual counseling
650-554-1000**

Isabel Stenzel istenzel@missionhospice.org

- David Kessler online support groups www.grief.com**
- Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Hotline
(650) 579-0350**
- Youtube, Apps (Calm/Headspace), books, etc.**
- NAMI COVID19 Resource Guide**
- Family Caregiver Alliance**