

Coping with COVID: Loss and Aging

Nicolle Brunale, LMSW & Mari Diamond, MSW Candidate

Introductions

Nicolle Brunale, LMSW

- Director of Senior Mental Health managing the Elder Abuse Prevention and Victim Assistance Program, the Partnership Innovation for Older Adults Program and the Gatekeeper Program at Family Services of Westchester
- Bachelor's Degree in Behavioral Science from York College of Pennsylvania
- Master's Degree in Social Work with a specialization in clinical practice and programming with families at Columbia University
- Specializes in the senior population providing mental health support and assistance to older victims of crime, particularly survivors of elder abuse
- Provides virtual intergenerational programming to seniors to decrease isolation during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Mari Diamond, BA

- Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and Women & Gender studies from Hunter College
- Pursuing a Master's Degree in Social Work at Fordham University
- Previous experience working at the Rape Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)
- Passionate about working with adults on issues relating to mental health, trauma, and relationships

Family Services of Westchester

Family Services of Westchester (FSW) offers a comprehensive range of both community-based and residential services to help Westchester's families. Serving 30,000 people a year, including 20,000 children, with counseling, education and support. Services include:

- Adoption and Children's Services
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Early Head Start, Head Start/UPK, PrimeTime
- Therapeutic Foster Care
- Family Mental Health Centers
- HIV/AIDS Programs
- Strengthening Families
- Senior Programs
- Restorative Justice Programs
- Veterans Outreach and Support



Content Warning

For your awareness: this training contains content that some may find distressing. If anything discussed or shown causes you discomfort, please mute the presentation and take time for yourself. If you would like to speak with one of the presenters (trained counselors) please send us a private chat in ZOOM, we will do our best to assist.

Agenda

- Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Coping with stress, anxiety, grief, and mental health struggles
- Therapeutic approaches
- Local volunteer opportunities
- Resources

Effects of COVID

COVID Cave Syndrome

- Feeling anxious or afraid about a return to society, regardless of vaccination status
- 49% of adults anticipate being uncomfortable about returning to in-person interactions when the pandemic ends
- We've learned how to isolate, socially distance, mask up, etc.
- The transition back into "normal" society can feel overwhelming
- Anxiety builds by estimating risk, possibility of exposure/spread
- Compounded by hospitalization and death rates in the news
- Important to note that the pandemic is a valid threat, and feeling anxiety over it is okay

Mental Health Impact

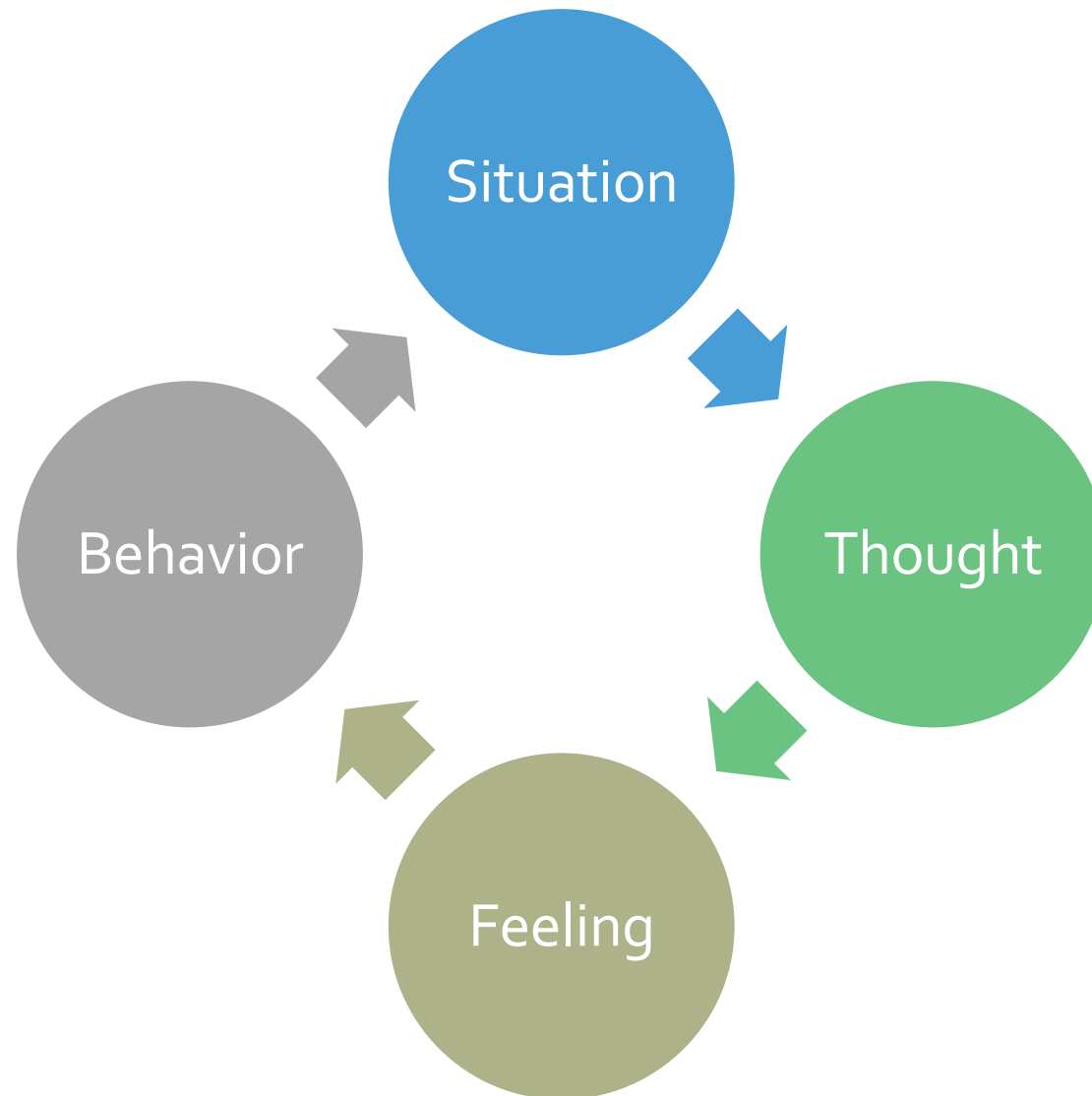
- Vulnerable populations (i.e. elderly population) deal with the added stress of knowing they are vulnerable
- Effects of quarantine and distancing can include loneliness, isolation, anxiety, and chronic stress
- Increased chronic stress can lead to lowered immune system function
- Research has shown increased incidence of depressive disorders, complex post-traumatic stress (PTSD) and adjustment reactions in the elderly
- For seniors who live alone, issues like lack of transportation can exacerbate these effects
- Increased reports of elder abuse in the home

Grief

- COVID has shown us a lot of tragedy and loss of loved ones
- Grief is different during a pandemic – i.e. Zoom funerals, limited visitation at hospitals, PPE blocking the faces of loved ones
- How to cope?
 - Recognize your loss
 - Be with the pain
 - Accept feelings like anger
 - Seek help and comfort when you need it
 - Remember that healing is not linear
 - Grieve and heal at your own pace
- Tips: exercise, sleep, social connection, vulnerability, allowing for happiness and joy

Coping in the COVID-19 Pandemic

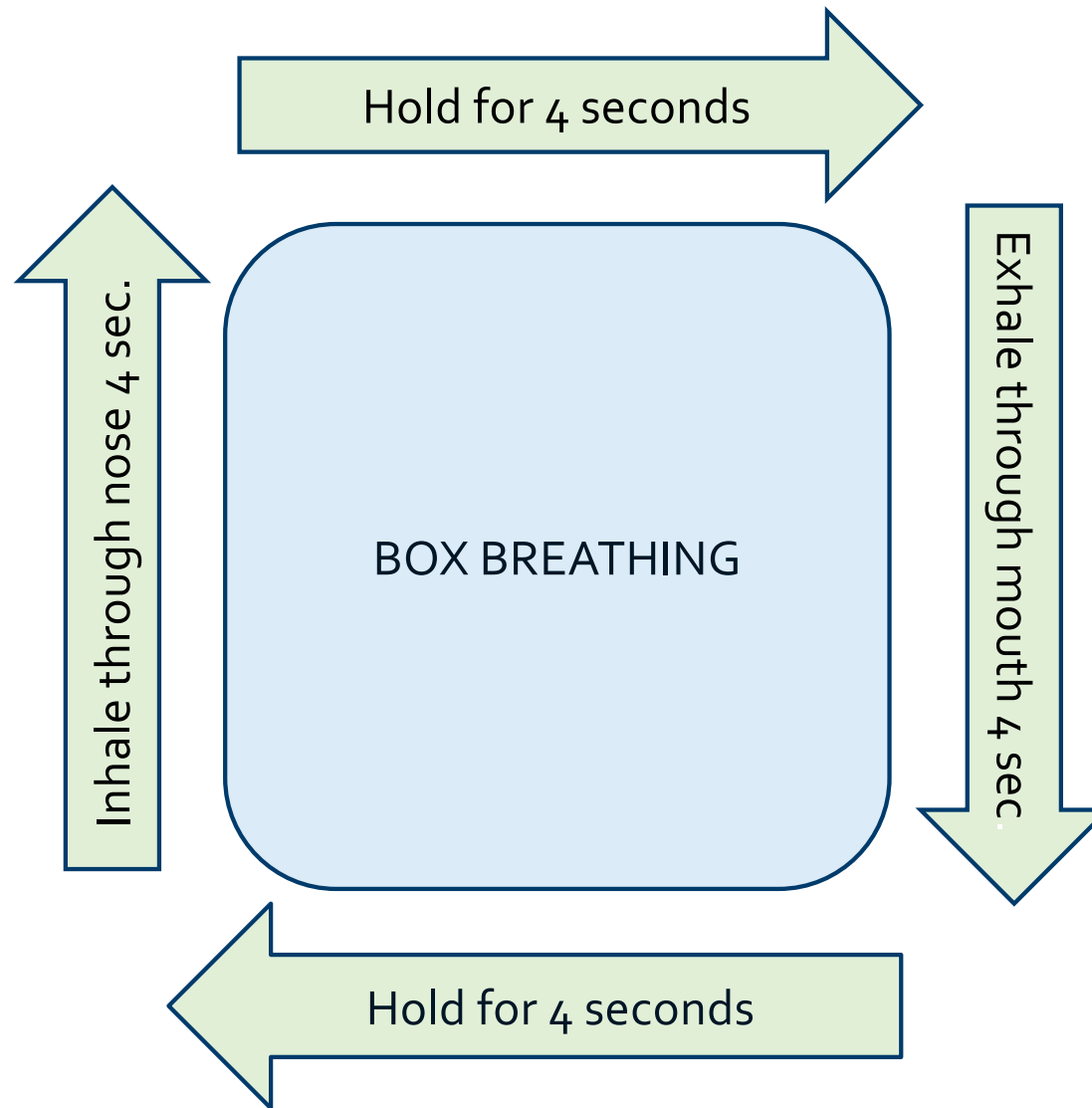
A Quick Lesson into Mental Health



Coping Skills

- Develop a plan to connect with family, friends or loved ones.
- Limit news consumption
- Care for living things
- Take care of your body
- Listen to music, find activities that bring joy
- Keep your mind active
- Use calming techniques
- Find ways to laugh
- Create short personal videos that can be shared between family and loved ones and the older adult

Mindfulness Exercise



Using Technology

- Use online tools to connect with friends and family.
- Help others.
- Take a virtual vacation.
- Listen to a podcast.
- Read or listen to a book online.
- Start your journey to lifelong learning and take a class.
- Stay fit.
- Watch a concert, opera, or dance performance.

Mental Health Resources

- Crisis Prevention and Response Team at (914) 925-5959
- National Suicide Hotline (800) 273-TALK or (800) 273-8255
- NYS Substance Abuse HOPEline – (877) 8-HOPENY / Text 467369
- The Department of Community Mental Health - (914) 995-1900 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday-Friday or text us at #914-461-7281.
- MHA Westchester: To schedule an appointment at a location convenient to you call our Central Scheduler at [\(914\) 345-0700](tel:9143450700) ext. 7350.
- Westchester Jewish Community Services- Leslie Hernandez, Director of Admitting (914) 737-7338 x 3119
- Family Services of Westchester
 - Hastings-on-Hudson (Echo Hills). (914) 274-8334 Ext. 223
 - Mount Vernon (914) 668-9124, Ext. 11
 - Pelham (914) 738-1728
 - Port Chester (914) 305-6837
 - Sleepy Hollow (914) 631-2022
 - White Plains (914) 948-8004, Ext. 22
 - Yonkers (914) 964-6767

**Need
to talk?**

**Feeling
uncertain,
overwhelmed,
anxious during COVID?**

[Here to talk](#) | [Here to listen](#) | [Here to support](#)

We provide . . .

- Information
- Education
- Emotional support
- Links to resources

We can provide virtual presentations on:

- Recognizing common reactions to COVID
- Building coping skills for the recovery process
- Managing disaster-related stress
- Identifying and addressing the community's needs

Contact Us!

**Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm
914-708-6104**

We are here for YOU.

Free, anonymous & confidential

A program of the NYS Office of Mental Health
Funded by FEMA

**NYProject
HOPE**
Coping with COVID

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FSW
FAMILY SERVICES
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Volunteer Opportunities



References

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- <https://files.asprtracie.hhs.gov/documents/managing-the-effects-of-social-distancing-in-older-adults-during-covid-19.pdf>
- <https://socialworklicensemap.com/blog/social-isolation-resources-older-adults/#tech>

Thank You

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