

# Caregiver Self-Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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# Agenda

- Introductions
  - Pilar Trelles, MD
  - Michelle Gorenstein, PsyD
  - Jessica Zweifach, PhD
- Parent Self-Care: The Basics
- Parent Self-Care: Cognitive Strategies
- Parent Self-Care: Behavioral Strategies
- Question and Answer

# Caregiver Self-Care: The Basics

- Why should we make this a focus?



# Caregiver Self-Care: The Basics



## Physical Health

- Nutrition
- Sleep
- Exercise
- Medical health

## Emotional Health

- Stay connected
- Spirituality
- Find internal space  
for yourself

# Caregiver Self-Care: Cognitive Strategies

- Validate and label your own emotions
  - Ex: I am feeling overwhelmed right now and that is okay.
- Shift expectations with regards to school work for your children, your job, household chores
- Be flexible
  - If the morning work is not going well it is okay to go for a walk and reset
  - If a schedule is not working, change it

# Caregiver Self-Care: Cognitive Restructuring

- Reframe situations
  - Raising your voice → A lesson on emotion regulation and apologizing
- Be Kind To Yourself
  - “What would I say to my closest friend if they were in this specific situation?”
- Challenge unhelpful thoughts
  - “I should be able to get through all of assignments my child’s teacher gave us” → “I am doing the best that I can to help my child complete his assignments while managing other responsibilities. There will be other days to catch up if not I can always email me child’s teacher for suggestions.”
- Utilize self talk to help you through stressful situations

# Caregiver Self-Care: Behavioral Strategies

- Behavioral Activation: plan one pleasurable activity daily
  - e.g. music, a bath, engage in a hobby
- Affirmations – post a phrase that motivates you
  - *Today is a new day; I am strong and capable*
- Cut out one activity a day or week that you wouldn't miss
- Support child's independence in activities
  - 5 minutes of special time and then transition away
  - Allow for more screen time or other highly motivating activities
- Schedule time for a social outlet: phone, zoom
  - Try to engage even if you do not feel like it in the moment

# Caregiver Self-Care: Behavioral Strategies

- Consider limiting COVID-19 content
- Meditation, deep breathing, imagery
- Mandala – perhaps while your child engages in art
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
  - Tense and release muscles throughout body
- Other physical activity
  - Take walk, engage in stretching or a yoga video
- Gratitude jar or conversation with your family to end the day
- Seek outside support / therapy if needed



# Questions & Answers

- Thank you for your attention and participation!
- Please write questions into chat feature and let us know of additional topics you would like covered
- For copies of slides, please email: [audrey.rouhandeh@mssm.edu](mailto:audrey.rouhandeh@mssm.edu) or [bari.britvan@mssm.edu](mailto:bari.britvan@mssm.edu)

## Resources

### General Mental Health Resources:

**NYC Well :**NYC Well is your connection to free, confidential mental health support. Speak to a counselor via phone, text, or chat and get access to mental health and substance use services, in more than 200 languages, 24/7/365.Text: Text "WELL" to 65173 (message & data rates may apply when using the SMS service)

Call: 1-888-NYC-WELL or visit their <https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/>

**All Mental Health:** <https://coronavirus.allmentalhealth.org/> A free website with coping and communication skills specific to COVID-19

**Anxiety and Depression Association of America** <https://adaa.org/finding-help/coronavirus-anxiety-helpful-resources> has resources to manage COVID-19 related anxiety

**National Alliance on Mental Illness, COVID-19 Resource and Information Guide** <https://www.nami.org/covid-19-guide>

**Mental Health America (MHA), Mental Health and COVID-19- Information and Resources** <https://mhanational.org/covid19>

## Resources

### Sleep Hygiene:

**Sleep Foundation, Sleep Guidelines During the COVID-19 Pandemic** <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-guidelines-covid-19-isolation>

### Free Exercise Classes:

**Vox, Eight Great Fitness Apps For Socially Distant Gym Goers,** <https://www.vox.com/2020/4/3/21201482/coronavirus-gym-home-workouts-apps-peloton>

**Parade, 125 + Free Streaming Workouts To Do From Home During Coronavirus** <https://parade.com/1011717/jessicasager/best-free-workouts/>

## Resources

### Relaxation Resources:

**Head Space** is currently offering free meditations, sleep, and movement exercises <https://www.headspace.com/covid-19>

**Insight Timer** has a library of 30,000 guided meditation exercises <https://insighttimer.com/>

**UCLA Mindful app** is always free and utilizes a research-based approach <https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/ucla-mindful-app>

**Calm** has cultivated a series of free relaxation tools called Take a Deep Breath <https://www.calm.com/blog/take-a-deep-breath>