

# Trying Times: Stress, Anxiety, Depression and Grief

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Saint Mark's Cathedral, Seattle

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# Our Presenters



## Help Bar Deadly Influenza From Seattle

By DR. J. D. TUTTLE,  
State Health Commissioner

Don't get into crowds, don't cough or sneeze without using a handkerchief, get plenty of fresh air, and when the symptoms of a cold appear isolate yourself as far as possible from others.

By SURGEON GENERAL RUPERT BLUE,  
U. S. Public Health Service

First there is a chill, then fever, headache, backache, reddening of the eyes, aches all over the body and general prostration. Persons so attacked should go to bed at once and call a physician.

NIGHT  
EXTRA

The Seattle Daily Times

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, SATURDAY EVENING, OCT. 5, 1918. Price 10 CENTS

**CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, SHOWS CLOSED**  
EPIDEMIC PUTS BAN ON ALL PUBLIC ASSEMBLIES



# Unprecedented Times...



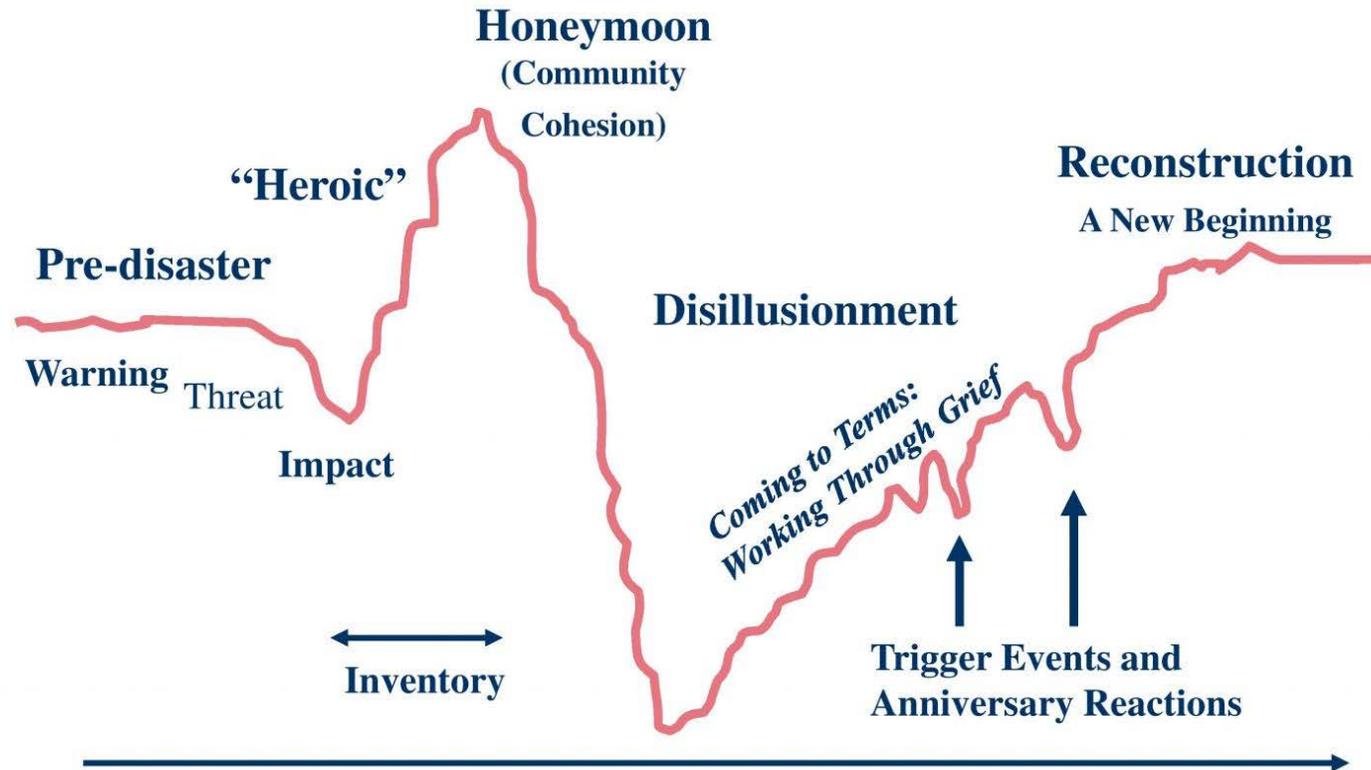
- ▶ Pandemic has psychological impact
  - ▶ Life/death concerns for health
  - ▶ Financial concerns
  - ▶ Sudden changes to how we live our daily lives

# Health experts view of the psychological impact of a pandemic

1. Event
2. Emergency Response
3. Honeymoon
4. Disillusionment
5. Reconstruction/Adaptation



# Typical Phases of Disaster



# Our Expected Responses at the Time of an “Event”

## Initial Anxiety

- **Adaptive Anxiety-** Prepare and Protect
  - Get supplies
  - Gather information (watch news, contact work and school, etc.)
  - Make adjustments to living (set up home office, plan to isolate, etc.)
  - The extent to which we are better able to prepare and protect, the better our coping and resilience
- **Maladaptive Anxiety-**
  - Avoiding/acting as if the threat is no real concern
  - Rule-breaking
  - Excessive preparing
  - Clinical Anxiety Symptoms
  - Panic

# Acute Stress Reaction (first 1-2 months)

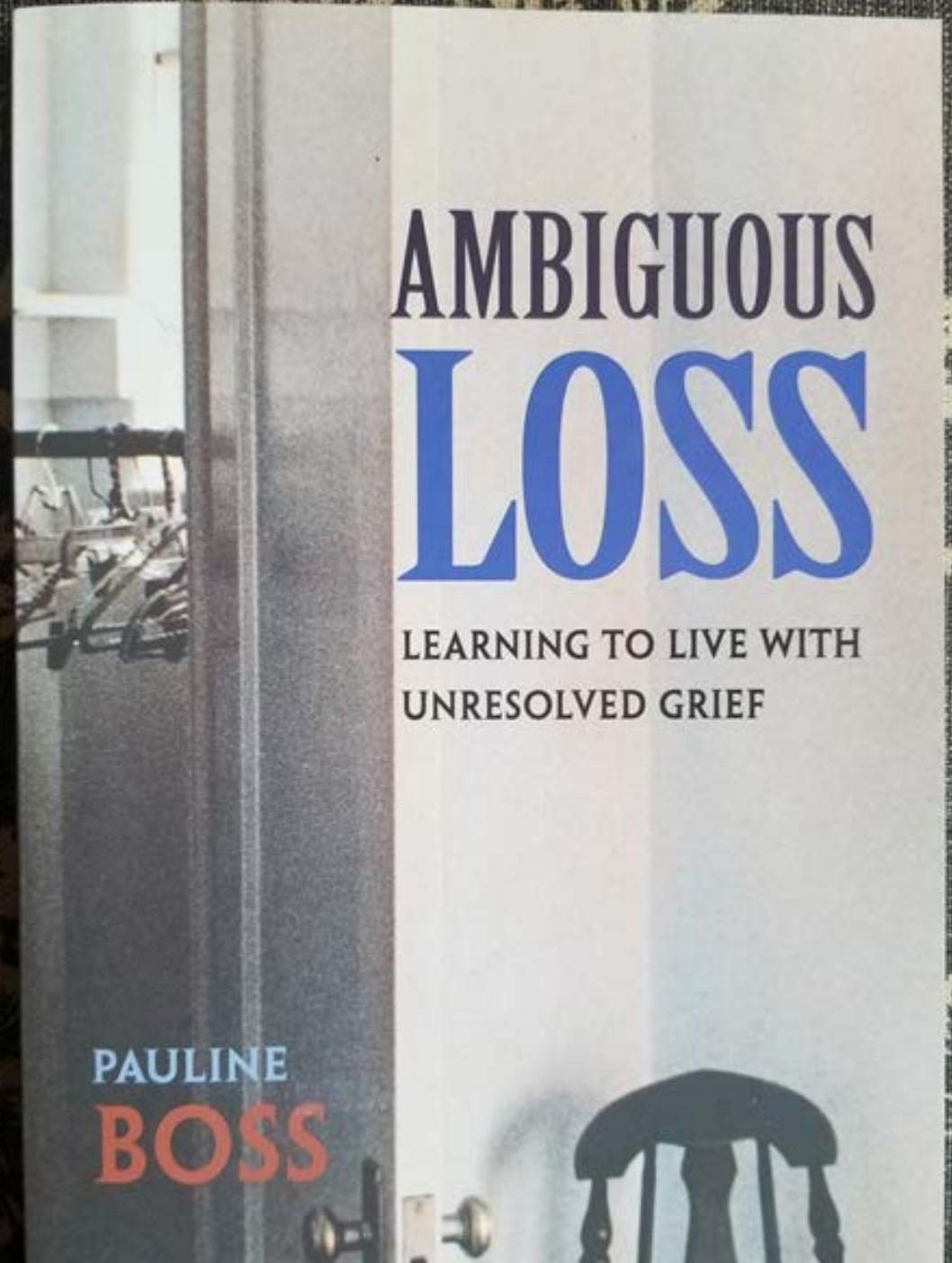
- Symptoms occur in many if not most people
  1. Poor concentration
  2. Forgetfulness
  3. Irritability
  4. Reduced productivity
  5. Mentally disorganized
  6. Negative thoughts/sadness
  7. Intrusive dreams or memories
  8. Avoidance (of work or school)
  9. Insomnia/hypersomnia
  10. Headaches/ Stomachaches

Grief, Loss,  
and  
Depressive  
Symptoms  
(months 2-6)

- Grief is a part of life...
  - It is the strong, sometimes overwhelming reaction seen after a loss or natural disaster
  - We can feel empty, numb-unable to feel joy or sadness
  - We may feel angry
  - We may experience physical symptoms



Grief, Loss,  
and  
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Symptoms  
(months 2-6)

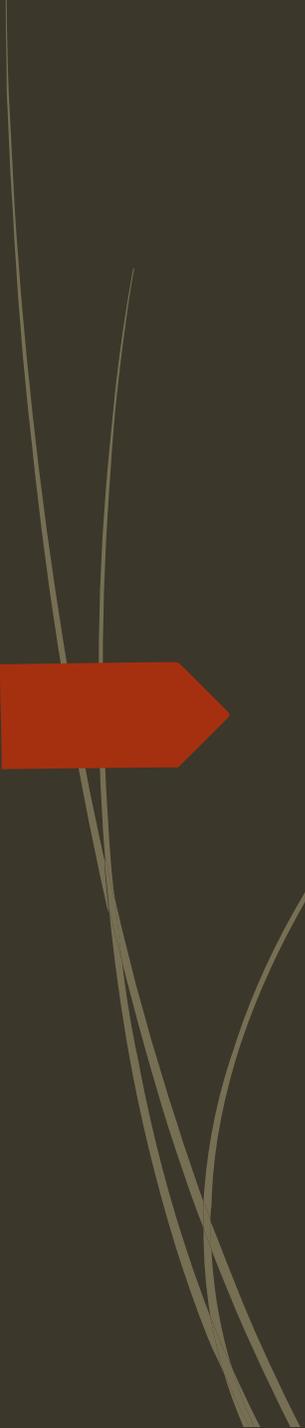


AMBIGUOUS  
LOSS

LEARNING TO LIVE WITH  
UNRESOLVED GRIEF

PAULINE  
BOSS

The book cover features a photograph of a doorway leading to a room with a chair. The text is printed in blue and red on a light background.



## Grief, Loss, and Depressive Symptoms (months 2-6)

- ▶ Depression-some will have these symptoms
  - ▶ A lack of interest in previously pleasurable or daily activities
  - ▶ Significant weight gain or loss
  - ▶ Insomnia/excessive sleeping
  - ▶ Lack of energy or ability to concentrate
  - ▶ Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt
  - ▶ Troubling symptoms (a few will have these)



Troubling  
Symptoms  
(a few will  
have  
these)

“Acting out”

Domestic abuse episodes

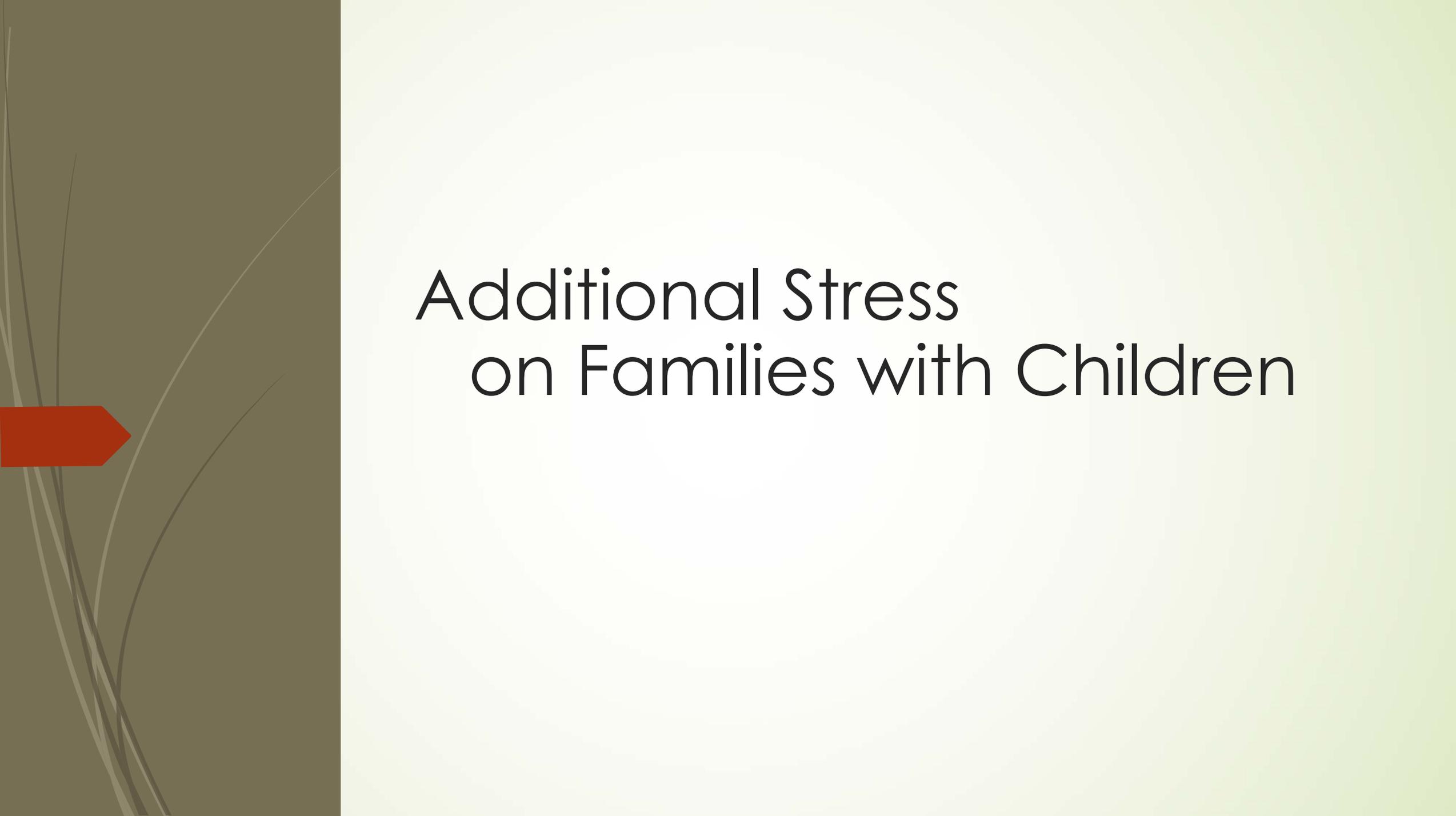
Substance use becomes abuse

Risk of suicide



# We can reduce the likelihood of more troubling symptoms with...

- ▶ Increased social connections and support
- ▶ Adaptive coping skills--Resilience
  - ▶ Develop a sense of purpose- even small actions matter, focus on what you **can** do
  - ▶ Focus on being psychologically flexible--we adapt better
  - ▶ Focus on hope--what are the positives in this trying time?
  - ▶ Many Faith communities have built-in psychological support that aid resilience
    - ▶ Social connections
    - ▶ Listening ear
    - ▶ Opportunities to be helpful in the community
    - ▶ Spiritual practices that deepen our compassion and connection to the collective whole



# Additional Stress on Families with Children

“Trifecta” of stressors while trying to keep everyone safe.



WORK



SCHOOL



CHILDCARE

# Trifecta: Work Pressures

Often dramatic changes if one or both parents now working from home

Zoom meetings; endless emails; “always available” expectations; time zone differences

If the parent is an essential worker there is concern the parent may be exposed to the virus and get sick or expose others in the house.

Numerous educational changes taxing our adaptive responses

Sometimes unrealistic expectations from teachers who have little or no experience with online teaching

The need for students to learn to use technology while also learning the educational content

Children are primarily social learners and are not able to be as independent at home as they are at school

Trifecta:  
School  
Pressures

Parenting well is extremely demanding, and now there are no breaks to recover

There is the need to manage the home as well as the work and school responsibilities

There was very little (if any) time to prepare for this new level of demands

Many parents are concerned they are not meeting the developmental and educational needs of their children



Trifecta:  
Childcare



# Childhood responses to stress

- Many of the behaviors that we see in typical reactions are also seen in children with maladaptive reactions but with a **greater frequency or severity**.
- Think about your child's "baseline" and how her or his current behavior looks compared to that.
  - Problems with attention and concentration--impact learning
  - Irritability and defiance
  - Sleep and appetite changes
  - General worry--school, health, what will happen in the future
  - Seeking attention/difficulty with separating

# Childhood responses to stress—Preschool

## Typical:

- some tantrums
- some tearfulness
- whining
- clingy

## Maladaptive:

- persistent and intense tantrums
- crying without normal evidence of joy in tasks and activities normally pleasurable to her/him
- regression in areas such bladder and bowel control



# Responses to stress—Middle Childhood

## Typical:

- complaints about schoolwork
- some peer challenges
- wanting some privacy

## Maladaptive:

- no work completion
- refusal to talk with peers or teachers
- unwillingness to go outside for a walk or to play because of Covid-19 fears

# Responses to stress—Adolescence

## Typical:

- assertion of autonomy
- decisions around structuring tasks that are not governed by online school schedules
- some emotionality (anger, sadness, frustration)

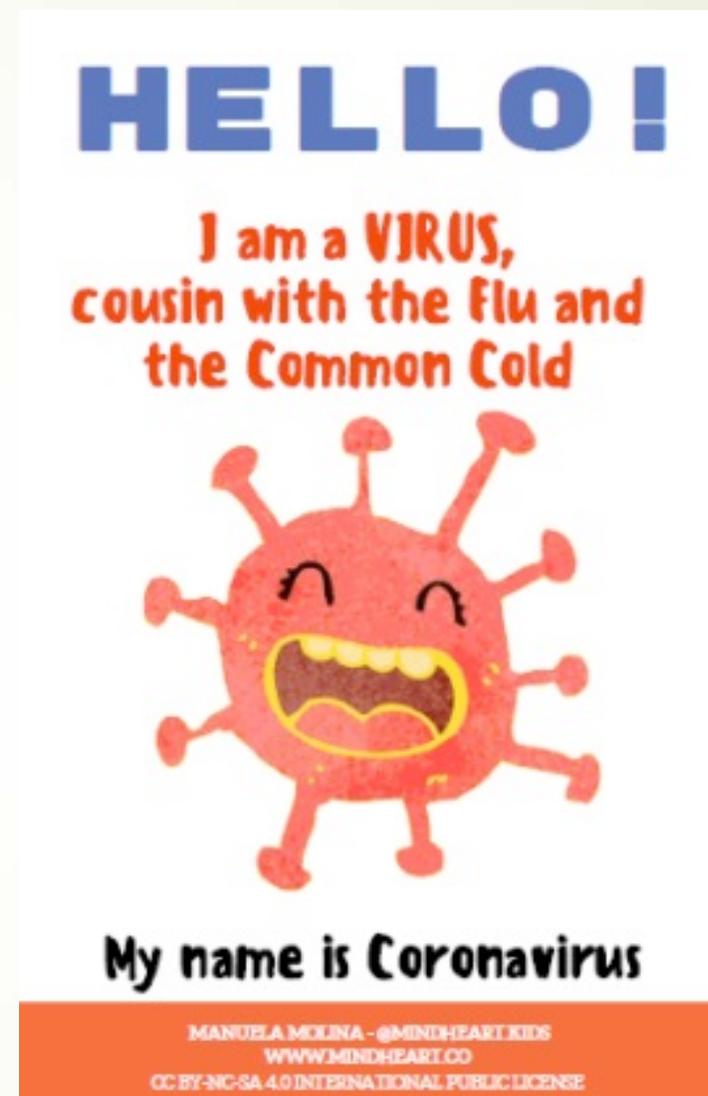
## Maladaptive:

- persistent social isolation
- Under- or over-eating
- unusual levels of moodiness
- outbursts, statements of futility: “Why should I live if this is all life is going to be?”

# What to do to help?

- Talk about the virus and its impact on your child in an age appropriate manner
- Validate emotions
- Encourage self-regulation

*If behavior is more extreme, consult your healthcare provider or mental health professional*



# Coping Tips

Set simple, realistic routines for the entire family to preserve the structure of the day without being rigid. Include regular times for:

- Sleep
- Mealtimes
- School
- Creative time
- Family time
- Exercise
- Quiet rest time (if you can get it!)

“I can't get them to do schoolwork!”



Review your children's workload and compare it to regular school



Email or ask the teacher for a phone call to discuss challenges



Explain the problem and ask for guidance--teachers are learning too!



Adjust expectations & workload based on your child's current functioning.



## Parent's needs vs. children's needs

Children will need more scaffolding at this time

Children who have trouble initiating tasks and sustaining attention may have even more difficulty with distance learning

Have a visual signal when you are working and can't be interrupted

Consider special toys or apps for your kids to use only while you can't be interrupted

Have some quality connection time before work or school

Rhythms  
of Life

Try to stay with a daily routine

Monitor

Monitor your alcohol intake

Self-  
care

Try to get some personal recovery time



Take care  
of yourself  
first so you  
can take  
care of  
others



## Practice generosity

- Know that all family members are going through a trying time
- Have “soft eyes”
- Send loving messages, hide notes, surprise others!

Cultivate a sense of humor! (Thank you, David Horsey!)





## Relax screen-time limits

Learning, social connections, and entertainment are all online now; children will be online more



Continue to monitor for safety



If your child had a problem before with internet use, keep an eye on him/her now. If it becomes concerning, contact their pediatrician for advice

Consider keeping a journal and encourage your children to keep one as well.

T H I R D E D I T I O N

"Dr. Pennebaker has demonstrated that expressing emotions appears to protect the body against damaging internal stress and seems to have long-term health benefits."—*The New York Times*

# Opening Up by Writing It Down

How Expressive Writing  
Improves Health and Eases  
Emotional Pain

James W. Pennebaker, PhD  
Joshua M. Smyth, PhD



# Model Resilience



Resources, Q&A, Next Steps