

CAREGIVER CONNECTION

EMBRACE ~ EDUCATE~ENGAGE~EMPOWER

Managing Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic

During this time of physical distancing and uncertainty, many older adults and caregivers are feeling isolated, lonely, agitated, and withdrawn.

It's critically important for you to stay in touch with your counselor, therapist, or psychiatrist if you have an existing mental health condition or substance use disorder. Telemedicine-video chat-is the safest way right now to have an appointment. The good news is that under Medicare, healthcare providers can reduce or waive cost-sharing for telemedicine visits. (Check with your provider about specifics.)

Relieving stress and anxiety is also critically important now. **Here are seven tips that all of us can use as we navigate these uncertain times:**

1. **Stay informed and take practical steps to protect yourself and loved ones.** Get the facts from trusted sources such as the CDD, your local health department, and NCOA. Do not stay glued to the news as this will only worsen the distress you may be feeling right now.
2. **Engage in healthy activities:** Get 7-9

hours of sleep each night; eat a healthy, well-balanced diet; do not smoke, drink no more than 1 alcoholic drink per day or none at all per your doctor's instructions; and finally, exercise your body and mind. Meditation, walking, gardening, and doing exercise routines in your home are all beneficial to your mental health.

3. **Make sure you have at least a one month supply of the prescription and over-the-counter medications** you need to manage your mental and other on-going conditions. Take all of your medications as directed by your health care providers.
4. **Stick to regular routines as much as possible.** You may need to create a new routine to account for working at home, exercising indoors, caring for grandchildren, cleaning, and other daily activities. Integrate old and new enjoyable hobbies into your daily routine.
5. Stay connected with your family, friends, and other support networks (faith, hobbies, etc.). Having someone to talk to about your needs

and feelings is vital for mental health. Make a commitment to contact at least one person per day for continued social connection through telephone, or e-mail, social media, and video conference, if you have Internet access. If you are a member of a peer support group, stay connected through the telephone or a video platform such as Zoom

6. Try as much as possible to be positive and relish the simple things in life. So many people across the country are helping neighbors, the elderly and communities during this crisis. After this pandemic is over, it is hopeful that we will be stronger, kinder, and more connected with each other.
7. Help others, through peer support, neighbor checking, and childcare for medical personnel restricted in hospitals fighting against COVID-19 when safe to do so. Helping others gives us a sense of purpose and feelings of control during these uncertain times.

From: NCOA Blog-Healthy Living;
by Kathleen A. Cameron,
BSPHarm, MPH

Special Points of Interest:

- **Managing Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic**
- **Community Resources Spotlight**
- **Community Resources to Utilize Now**
- **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Corner**
- **Easy Family Meal with 6 Ingredients**

A Note from Tracy...

A Season of Unknowns...

What a year 2020 has been so far. I think we all are juggling a lot of and responsibilities and potentially feeling overwhelmed by the state of the world. Let me remind you that:

- * *It's okay to feel however you are feeling right now*
- * *Self-care is not selfish and it's not a luxury. It's essential to your health & well-being, especially right now*

*Take time for you and for your self-care. This issue is full of resources, tips and websites to help you navigate through needs you may have during this pandemic. Please reach out for assistance and help as needed. **We Are All In This Together!!!***

You are welcome to contact the First Tennessee Area Agency on Aging Disability at any time. We're here to help.

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Family Caregiving...Don't Try It Alone

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Thought for the Day ..."We do not have to become heroes overnight. Just a step at a time, meeting each thing that comes up, seeing it is not as dreadful as it appeared, discovering we have the strength to stare it down."
~Eleanor Roosevelt

Community Resources Spotlight



We recognize that older adults and caregivers are facing many hardships due to COVID-19. We want to show you care through conversation and make sure your needs are met during this very difficult time. Each week, we can have a volunteer call and check on you or a loved one. During these calls, we will check-in, assess your needs, and see if there is any way we can better assist you. At minimum, our volunteers will conduct one call a week, but you can request more if you need it. If you would like to be added to our telephone reassurance registry, please go to <https://www.tn.gov/aging/our-programs/care-through-conversation.html> and submit the registration form.

Resources For You To Utilize Now...

How COVID-19 Spreads

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-covid-spreads.html>

Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home Everyday Steps and Extra Steps When Someone is Sick

<http://bit.ly/33vrrmod>

Keep your distance while staying connected. Play it safe to protect yourself and others from COVID-19

<http://bit.ly/2QAPMaG>

Frequently Asked Questions about Takeout and Food Safety

<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/documents/cedep/novel-coronavirus/COVID19-guidance-for-take-out.pdf>

Follow these important tips to help keep your family safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Check out the science-based information about supporting health with good nutrition from eatright <http://www.eatright.org/coronavirus>

Are you looking for tips on how to talk to your kids or grandkids about COVID-19? <https://www.kidcentraltn.com/health/when-kids-get-sick/coronavirus--what-families-need-to-know-.html>

Are you looking for ways to ease your kids' or grandkids fears about COVID-19 when you are stressed or uncertain too. First, relax. We're all in this together. Second, listen to this podcast with Dr. Carolina Clark who works with the TN Department of Health. <https://www.buzzsprout.com/335633/3190918>



Did you lose employment or half of your income because of COVID-19 emergency?

<https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/news/2020/3/25/financial-aid-available-for-certain-families-that-lost-employment-due-to-covid-19.html>

Economic impact payments: What you need to know!

<https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/economic-impact-payments-what-you-need-to-know>

Connecting People with the Assistance They Need: FTAAAD Information & Assistance Call 423-928-3258

ALZ Connected® and 24/7 Helpline

Through the Alzheimer's Association, ALZ Connected is a free online, community/message board. Visit alzconnected.org or call 1-800-272-3900 for the helpline.

If you, or someone you care about, are

feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others please reach out

- ⇒ Call 911
- ⇒ Visit the Disaster Distress Hotline, call 1-800-985-5990, or text Talk-WithUs to 66746
- ⇒ Visit the National Domestic Violence Hotline or call 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224

Enrichment Friday Video Series from Alzheimer's Tennessee—The latest enrichment session offers information and inspiration to help cope with the losses we have all experienced due to the coronavirus.

<https://www.alztennessee.org/help/enrichment-sessions>

Virtual Support Group for Family Caregivers to connect via telephone, as person-to-person support groups are currently suspended. Plan to connect on Mondays at 1 p.m. CST/2 p.m. EST. For details visit www.alz.tennessee.org/support-groups

School Meal Programs Check with local school systems on meal options for children. If you live close to a school you can pick up meals for children at that school even if the children do not attend that school. Visit here for a map: <https://arcg.is/bua4O>

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Corner

Homeschooling Through COVID-19

With schools across the country closed to stop the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, we find ourselves in a period of widespread emergency homeschooling. At this time, the importance of providing children with an excellent education must be balanced with both children's mental health needs during this crisis and with grandparents' ability to supervise instruction.

- ◆ ***This is crisis schooling, not ordinary homeschooling.*** You do not have to be a perfect homeschooling grandparent. Your grandchildren do not have to be perfectly put together. This is an emergency situation. Give yourself, and your grandchildren, some grace. What your grandchildren need most is to be safe, secure, and loved.
- ◆ ***Your grandchild's school should serve as a resource.*** Your grandchild's school may be closed, but your grandchild's teacher is still responsible for their education. You should never have to create or purchase curriculum for your grandchild; your grandchild's and school should be there to assist you during this period.

If your grandchild's school has not provided you with resources and guidance, reach out to your grandchild's teacher.

- ◆ ***The research on online schooling is profoundly negative.*** Children are not designed to learn from a computer, absent interaction from a teacher or a parent. This is particularly true for younger children. It may help to sit with your grandchild while they complete online material. If you feel the expectations for online learning are too high, take your concerns to your grandchild's teacher.
- ◆ ***Homeschooling should not look like formal schooling.*** Your grandchildren do not need to do schoolwork for the same number of hours they attend school. Children who are homeschooled typically finish materials more quickly, because they can receive one-on-one attention and do not have to wait on other children. When it comes to your grandchild's instruction, quality is more important than quantity.
- ◆ ***Foster your grandchild's love of learning.*** It would be better for a

child to spend their days poking things with sticks in the backyard than for them to spend unending hours stuck at a table completing materials they hate. (This is particularly true for math.) Take care to ensure that your grandchild's instruction is engaging them; listen to your grandchild and ask their input. Involving your grandchild in planning their education will give them buy-in.

- ◆ ***Embrace boredom and creative free play.*** Children learn through games, puzzles, and yes, boredom. Boredom can be productive; bored children will eventually think of something to do, which may include things like building a village out of cardboard or using a tablet to create a stop-motion video featuring their toys' adventures. Boredom and free play are good things. You do not need to fill every second of your grandchild's day with activities.

Adapted from Coalition for Responsible Home Education website; *Homeschooling Through COVID-19*, <https://responsiblehomeschooling.org>

Tips for Grandparents:

Check out this kidcentraltn article that highlights home activity ideas to help avoid family boredom while practicing social distancing! <https://www.kidcentraltn.com/support/full-family-support/home-activities-to-help-avoid-family-boredom-while-practicing-social-distancing-and-self-isolation.html>

Goodnight with Dolly

Once a week for 10 weeks at 7:00 PM EST, The Book Lady will deliver her a bedtime story. The read alongs will be a personal gift from Dolly to all families. Free of charge but not free from obligation as the message will be to pass on the love and keep hope alive because we are all Together, You and I. <https://imaginationlibrary.com/goodnight-with-dolly/>

The FSU Center for Child Stress & Health created a story, coloring & activity book to help children cope with COVID-19.

The book teaches children about the virus, social distancing and how to express and manage strong emotions triggered by the outbreak. Please visit <http://fsustress.org/ebook.html> to access and download the book.



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**Easy Family Meal with 6 Ingredients
Black Bean Quesadillas**

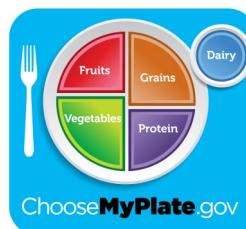
This quesadilla recipe can be served as a tasty lunch, dinner or side dish.

- 3/4 cup chunky salsa
- 1 can (15.5 ounce) low-sodium black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 cups shredded reduced-fat Colby & Monterey Jack cheese
- 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro (finely chopped) (dried can be used)
- 4 8-inch flour tortillas
- 1/2 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil

Directions

1. Using a small-hole strainer, drain liquid from salsa; discard liquid
2. Transfer leftover tomato mixture to a medium bowl
3. Mix in black beans, cheese, and cilantro until combined
4. Divide black bean mixture evenly over half of each tortilla (about 1/2 cup each)
5. Fold tortilla in half
6. Heat large griddle or skillet over medium-high heat
7. Brush with oil
8. Place filled tortillas on griddle or skillet
9. Cook, carefully flipping once, until tortillas are gold brown and crisp and cheese filling melts, about 5 minutes
10. Cut quesadillas into wedges

Serving suggestions: For a wholesome dinner, serve with a salsa chicken brown rice with vegetables and a piece of fruit for dessert.



**Connecting People with the
Assistance They Need:**

Contact us at:

Information & Assistance Line

(423) 928-3258

**Save paper and reduce
postage costs**

We hope you find the newsletter informative.

Please let us know if:

- You are willing to receive the newsletter via email
- You are no longer interested in receiving the newsletter
- If you have ideas/suggestions for future editions.

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