

## Processing the Pandemic: Mental Health Workshops

### Navigating Parenting Challenges in the Present Crisis

Many parents, whether those of young children, school-age children, or adolescents, feel under siege with all the demands on their time and energy. They report that they are now entertainers, educators, and schedule organizers, in addition to being nurturers, protectors, and supporters of growth. These changing roles for parents are added to the burden of managing their own work, taking care of the home, and confronting feelings of fear and failure.

In this workshop, participants, under the guidance of a mental health clinician, will share with other parents the stresses and challenges they face as well as the strategies that have helped them to cope during this pandemic. This workshop is tailored to different age groups and can focus on parenting young children, school-age children, or adolescents.

### Staying Connected to Your Partner in the Face of Differences

As couples are navigating the reopening of our communities, they are experiencing new challenges in their relationships. What may feel safe for one person might feel like a minefield for the other. The more significant the choices are, the greater the space for disagreement and feelings of risk and safety. Some people in relationships are feeling lonely, devalued, not seen, or disrespected for the choices they are making to be more active in the world or to continue to stay at home with less flexibility. Added to these questions is the stress of feeling disconnected from relationships with friends and family, which had served to strengthen the couple.

In this workshop, couples will have the opportunity to explore the similarities of their experiences with other

couples in order to best negotiate and communicate about their differences, create a safer place for conflict, and deal with the increased choices and pressures in their lives.

### Loneliness: The Pandemic Within the Pandemic

The months we've spent socially distancing, not connecting with each other physically, affects us all. While we're experiencing this separation in different ways, the feelings of loneliness are shared by so many. Before COVID-19, loneliness was on the rise and gradually emerging into the public view.

Presently, loneliness seems to affect our community in greater numbers, no matter if you're a preschooler, millennial, in middle age, or an older adult. This unique program will address what it means to be lonely; how loneliness touches our physical, mental, and spiritual health; how to recognize it; and coping skills. The program will feature text study, learning what our tradition teaches us about loneliness, and an expert talk with the opportunity for questions and chances to connect with each other on this important and timely issue.

### Physical Distancing and Social Connection

As rates of COVID-19 infection in the U.S. have surged, communities have had to respond with restrictions on social interactions and face-to-face contact. This has resulted in renewed concerns about the impact of social isolation on both the mental and physical health of our communities. This workshop will identify the risk factors of social isolation as well as help participants think creatively about how they can support physical distancing while maintaining social contact and support. Best practices from organizations that have effectively

responded to the crisis and information gathered from Jewish Family & Children's Service's workshops and consultation services will be presented as well.

### **Coping with Loss in Our Communities**

Loss can be experienced in many ways. The most obvious loss is the death of a family member or friend. There are other kinds of losses, however, such as the loss of connection to our family or community or a decrease in level of mobility and independence, that are not always readily acknowledged or appreciated for their impact, especially on older adult communities. Now, we are faced with the pandemic of COVID-19, its particular impact on older adults, and its associated traumatic grief. This workshop will explore loss and grief generally, but also the impact COVID-19 has had on our traditional grieving process. Through this session, participants will learn ways to support the grieving process in their communities that foster mental health and healing.

### **Trauma Exposure and Trauma Response: A Practical Guide to Caring for Yourself and Others During COVID-19**

We've all heard that we need to put our own oxygen mask on first to care for others, but what does that mean in the context of community trauma? The impact of trauma exposure, whether we call it compassion fatigue, vicarious traumatization, or empathic strain, is real. However, our response to this exposure can make all the difference in our ability to weather the storm and find healing. We offer this workshop to give you practical tools from trauma research and treatment that we can all use to take care of ourselves while caring for others, especially older adults.

### **Creating Caring Communities During COVID-19**

Social aggression is a phenomenon that occurs in communities and is particularly evident as a result of the stresses of COVID-19. We will address social aggression and how to effectively intervene when it is happening in our community. Participants will learn strategies to not only discourage "bullying" but also build stronger, more welcoming communities where social aggression even in stressful times is less likely to happen.

### **Preparing Your Child to Return to Daycare**

After months of being home, you have decided you are ready to start bringing your child back to daycare. In this workshop, we will explore strategies to prepare your child for the transition, create tools to help prepare him or her for all the new procedures and routines, and help parents process the complicated feelings they have in this moment.

### **Wisdom for Growing Older in the Midst of a Pandemic and the Importance of Fostering Wellness**

*"A human being would certainly not grow to be 70 or 80 years old if this longevity had no meaning for the species to which they belong. The afternoon of human life must also have a significance of its own and cannot be merely a pitiful appendage to life's morning."*

—Carl Jung

*"Rabbi Hillel used to say: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And when I am for myself alone, what am I? And if not now, when?"*

(Pirkei Avot/Ethics of Our Ancestors 1:14)

We have experienced physical isolation for many months and have tried to find creative ways to stay connected to each other and to ourselves. This workshop offers tips, techniques, and resources to promote wellbeing and connection based on current research and Jewish wisdom. It will be an opportunity for meaningful community conversations to explore together how we understand and find meaning and purpose in the experience of growing older during these uncertain times – the challenges, the transitions, the losses, and the joys!

### **Coping with COVID Stress During Pregnancy and the First Few Months of Parenthood**

In "normal" times, being pregnant and having a newborn is a momentous, unique time in a woman's life. At best, it may be a time full of contradictions of feelings: joy, exhilaration, fear, confusion, and love. All feelings are magnified. For the woman, it is a time of major role transitions that may be accompanied by confusion about one's self in the world and how to establish an enhanced identity. Being pregnant and having a newborn in this era of COVID presents new and additional challenges:

protecting yourself and your baby from the virus, dealing with the anxiety of giving birth in a hospital along with the restrictions on who joins you, and managing the disappointment of not being in close contact with friends and family to experience the connection and get the help and support you were hoping for and counting on.

In this workshop, participants will have the opportunity to share their experiences of pregnancy and/or giving birth and having a newborn in this unusual time. They will work with a clinical facilitator to help shift expectations to fit this current landscape and think creatively about opportunities to manage.

## PRESENTERS

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**Terri Chebot, M.Ed.**, is the Coordinator of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation at JF&CS, where she has been on staff for over 25 years. Terri is a senior trainer and teaches courses at the Infant Parent Training Institute at the JF&CS Center for Early Relationship Support®.

**Mary Curlew, LICSW**, is the Community Education and Training Specialist for Services for Older Adults at JF&CS. She is a Mental Health and Housing team member through JF&CS, providing training and consultation for staff and residents in independent senior housing and related agencies. Mary has over 20 years' experience providing mental health services and training in a variety of settings. Her specialties include trauma-informed care, older adult behavioral health, caregiver support, and holistic approaches to health care. Mary is a graduate of Boston College's Graduate School of Social Work and has advanced training in Eye Movement Desensitization Movement Reprocessing (EMDR), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), and mindfulness.

**Peggy Kaufman, M.Ed., LICSW**, is founding director of the JF&CS Center for Early Relationship Support®, where for 31 years she has worked in various capacities with parents of infants and young children, providing training, direct service, supervision, and developing support and clinical intervention programs. Peggy is on the faculty of the Infant Parent Training Institute at JF&CS. Peggy has also held faculty positions

at Wheelock College, Lesley College, Pine Manor College, and Bank Street College of Education.

**Jennifer Meyerhardt, LCSW, M.Ed., J.D.** is a program coordinator/supervisor and clinician at the JF&CS Center for Early Relationship Support®, where for over 21 years she has served in a number of roles creating and coordinating program teams for families who are at risk for a variety of biopsychosocial challenges. She has coordinated and led groups and webinars on a variety of parenting issues, provided training, and created training and information manuals.

**Marjorie U. Sokoll, M.Ed.** is the director of Aging and Spirituality at JF&CS, which offers older adults support when facing the challenges of illness, loss, or isolation. Marji has developed programs such as Spirited Aging, which supports older adults in their search to find meaning, joy, and spirituality in their lives as they grow older. Marji has presented locally and nationally on spirited aging, healing, end-of-life, and bereavement. She earned degrees in sociology and social work from Boston University and Tel Aviv University respectively, a graduate degree in counseling from Northeastern University, and a certificate of thanatology from the National Center for Death Education. She is a contributor to the book *Blessings for the Journey: A Jewish Healing Guide for Women with Cancer* and the author of "The Healing Circle: A New Model for Nurturing Spirituality in Jewish Family Service Agencies" published in the *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*.

**All workshops are offered at \$225/hour and are 1.5 hours each.**  
**If you are interested in scheduling a training or learning more, please contact Marji Sokoll at [msokoll@jfcsboston.org](mailto:msokoll@jfcsboston.org) or 781-693-5619.**