



# Your Mind Matters:

## Managing Stress During Transitions in the Pandemic

Casey Saylor, MSW  
Older Adult Project Manager

# MHAMMD

*For more than 100 years, the Mental Health Association of Maryland has addressed the mental health needs of Marylanders of all ages through programs that educate the public to increase understanding and provide resources, advance public policy to improve care and outcomes, and monitor the quality of services received by individuals living with mental illness and substance use disorders.*

***Programs for people, advocacy that changes lives.***



# MHAMMD

[www.mhammd.org/coronavirus](http://www.mhammd.org/coronavirus)

[www.mhammd.org/publications](http://www.mhammd.org/publications)

[www.mdaging.org/events](http://www.mdaging.org/events)

[www.mdaging.org/connections-project](http://www.mdaging.org/connections-project)

*Programs for people, advocacy that changes lives.*



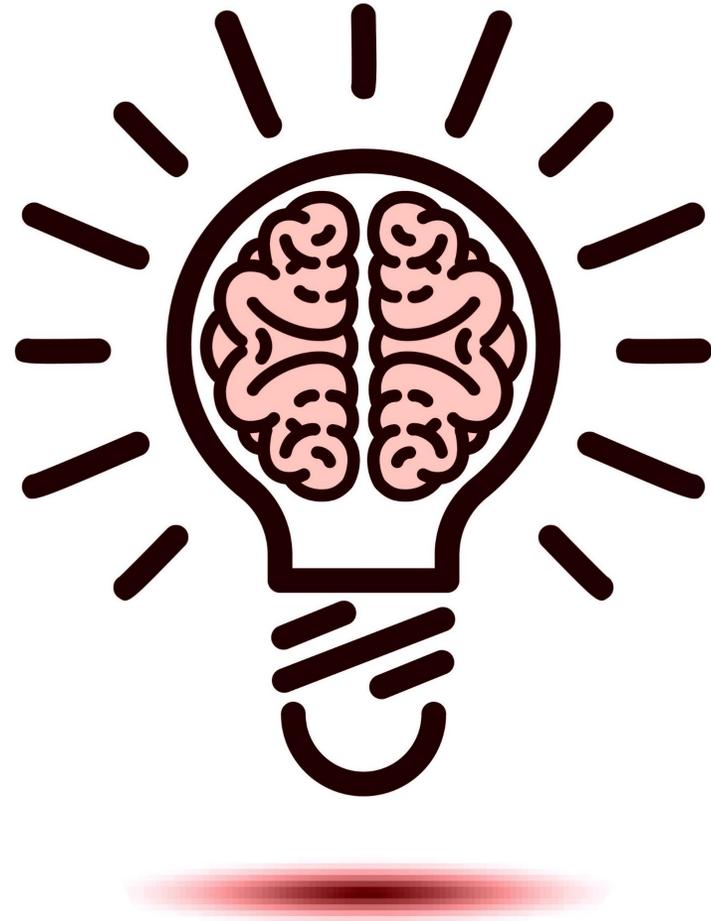
# Learning Objectives

- Learn about the stress hormone cortisol and how it affects our brain & body during transitions.
- Learn about the pandemic's impact on mental health.
- Review common transitions that may be causing stress at this stage in the pandemic and tips for coping with them.
- Learn about mental health resources that you can use to support your personal wellbeing.



# Cortisol

- The stress hormone.
- Designed to let you know when you're in danger.
- Connected to “fight” or “flight” response.



# Positive Stress



- Positive stress is called Eustress.
- It can help you accomplish goals and meet deadlines by providing mental alertness, motivation, and efficiency.
- Eustress can increase self-esteem.





## Cortisol - The Stress Hormone





*“The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the mental health of people of all ages. Now, more than ever, it is critical to reduce the stigma around mental health struggles, because that stigma often prevents individuals from seeking help.”*

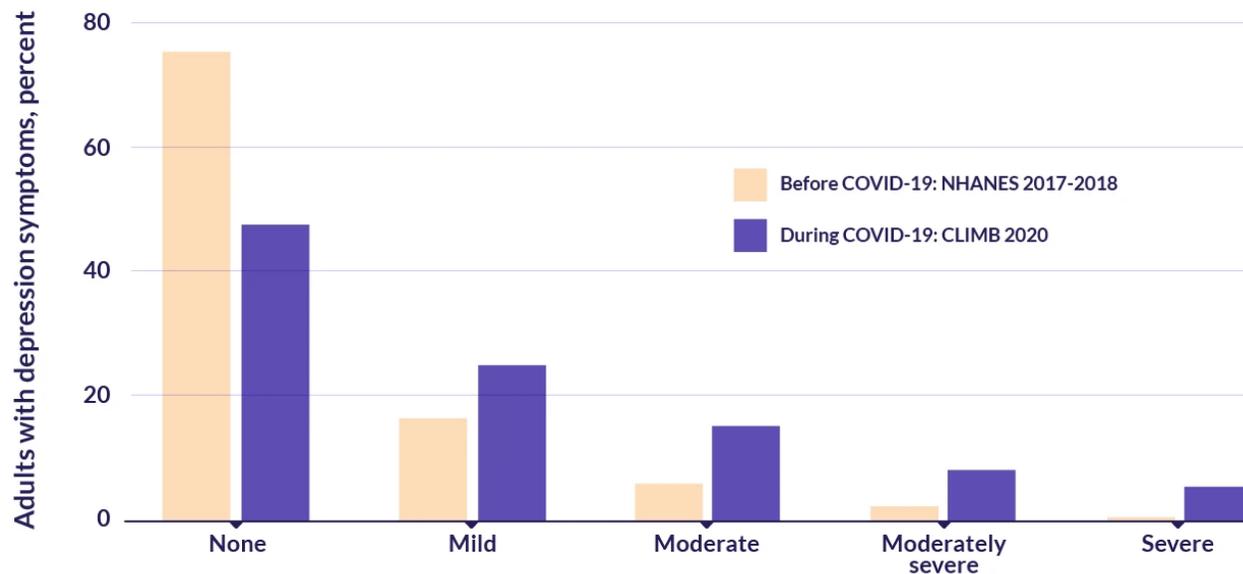


— [Mental Health America](#)



# Data: the Pandemic's Impact on Mental Health

## Depression symptoms in US adults before and during the Coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic



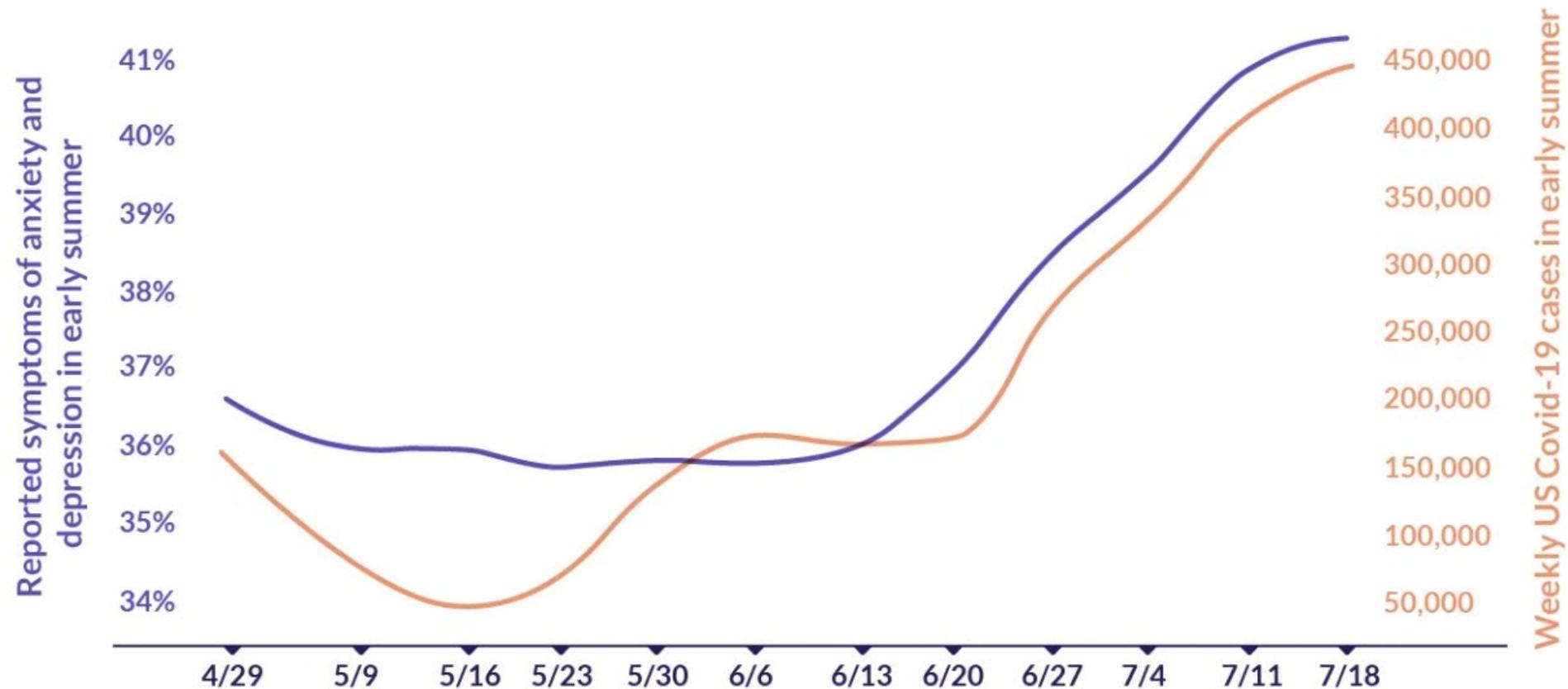
Source: JAMA Netw Open. 2020

Rate of depression symptoms were **more than 3x higher** during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Citation: Teh, D. (2021, September 6). [\*How the covid-19 pandemic is affecting our mental health too.\*](#) HealthMatch.



# Reported symptoms of anxiety and depression vs weekly US Covid-19 cases in early summer



Source: New York Times

Citation: Teh, D. (2021, September 6). [How the covid-19 pandemic is affecting our mental health too](#). HealthMatch.



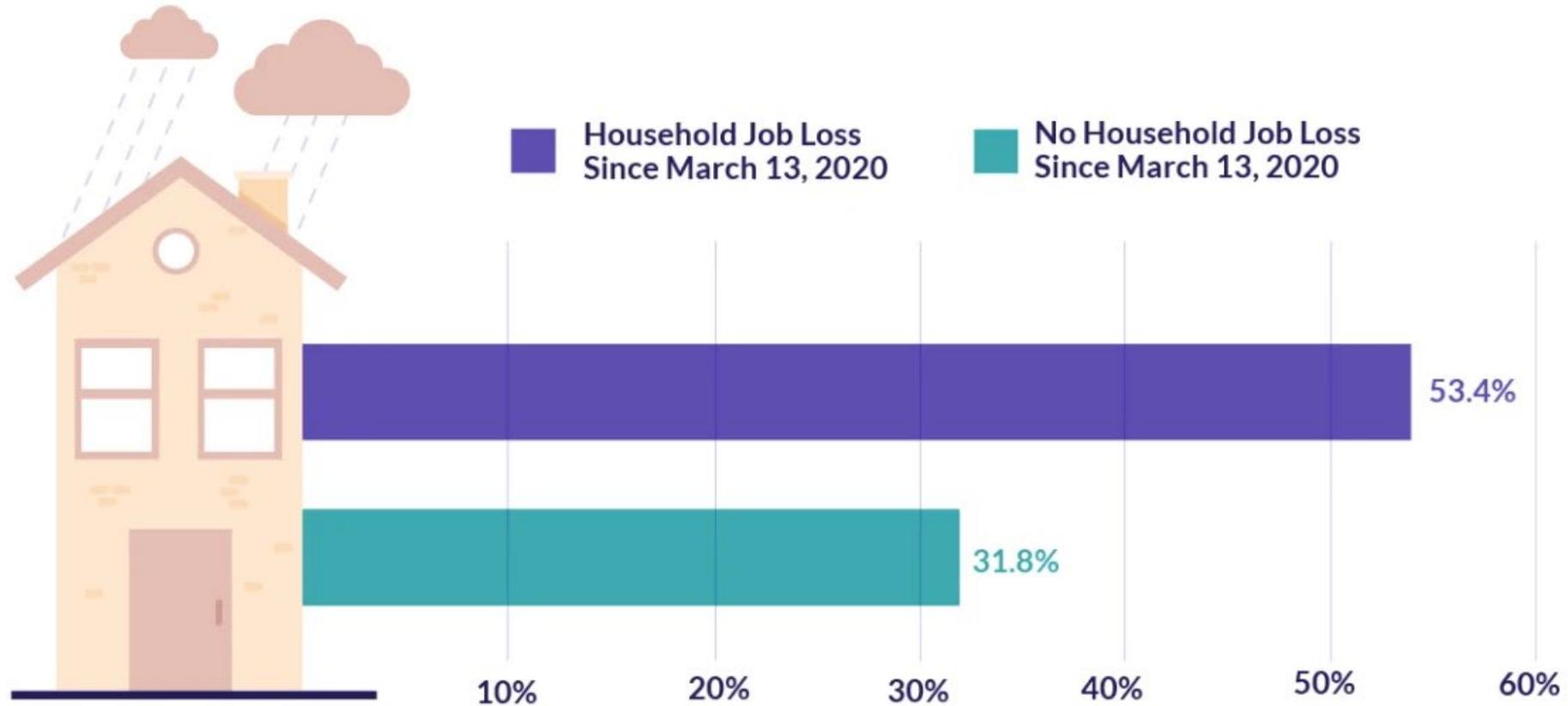
# Data: the Pandemic's Impact on Mental Health

## Quarantine's impact on mental health:

- Isolation, boredom, and loss of routine were significant causes of mental distress,
- Quarantined individuals were more likely to experience increased levels of anxiety related to getting infected with the disease or transmitting it to others,
- Can lead to post-traumatic stress symptoms, feelings of exhaustion, depressed mood, and increased irritability.



# Anxiety and/or depressive disorder during COVID-19 pandemic, by household job loss status



Source: US Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, 2020

Citation: Teh, D. (2021, September 6). [How the covid-19 pandemic is affecting our mental health too](#). HealthMatch.





# Data: the Pandemic's Impact on Mental Health

Research indicates that the following groups are at higher risk of experiencing adverse mental health effects during the pandemic:

- Low-income households
- Ethnic minorities
- Youth





Check in with yourself.



# Identify Stress Triggers

- Triggers of stress:
  - Being asked to come to gatherings, overload of information, tight finances, boredom, relationship problems, challenges meeting responsibilities, fear, fatigue, resistance from others, lack of control over situations, etc.

Your triggers: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Stressors that people may be navigating during the pandemic include:

- Feared or actual illness in themselves or loved ones, including those they cannot be with.
- Feared or actual loss of loved ones.
- Loss of employment, financial hardship, and food insecurity.
- Access to health care.
- Being isolated in an unsafe environment.
- Witnessing distressing scenes in the media.
- Supporting others who are directly affected.
- Juggling childcare with working from home.
- Distressed and anxious family members.
- Compounded stress, as the stress and trauma from previous incidents has left many people in a more vulnerable state.



# Common Transitions

- New variants of COVID-19,
- Changing guidance and policies,
- Re-entering public spaces,
- Helping children navigate attending school in-person,
- Sickness and recovery,
- Job loss or disruption,
- Grief and loss,
- General uncertainty.



In the chat...

*What transitions are you experiencing  
at this point in the pandemic?*



# Knowing When Stress Levels Are High

- Indicators of high stress:
  - Mood swings, anger with loved ones, problems with sleep, pain, illness, worry, resentments, negative self talk, feeling overwhelmed, low tolerance of stimulation, over-eating, etc.

Your indicators: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Techniques to Reduce Stress

- Techniques to reduce stress:
  - Exercise, eat properly, read, stay hydrated, focus on positives, engage in a hobby, listen to music, practice being flexible and forgiving, learn a new skill, take “time-outs”, ask for help / support, express yourself, etc.

More techniques: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





# Tips for Managing Cortisol Levels (Stress)

- Exercise regularly.
- Set a sleep schedule.
- Create a routine. Include things make you feel grounded and centered.
- Focus on things you can control.



# Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change,  
The courage to change the things I can,  
The wisdom to know the difference,  
*And the presence to feel the changing tides.*





# Tips for Managing Cortisol Levels (Stress)

- Set priorities
- Control your media consumption
- Use your support system
- Communicate hope



one  
day  
at  
a  
time





# Tips for Coping with Re-entry Anxiety

1. Mentally prepare: mentally walk-through scenarios that you may encounter.
2. Hold a “practice run:” visit the space beforehand.
  - Tidy up in preparation (office space, on-the-go spaces)
  - Incorporate new coping skills or routines that you’ve come to value. (i.e. [green plants](#), fabric flowers, aroma-therapy, etc.)
3. Advice specifically for supporting children is [available from the CDC](#).



# Tips for Coping with Safety Concerns

- Know the updated pandemic safety protocols for where you're going.
- If you have any concerns, communicate them clearly.
- Continue utilizing safety measures that you have control over, like wearing a mask and using hand sanitizer.
- Clearly communicate your personal safety needs to those you're meeting (i.e. social distancing, mask wearing, negative tests, etc.)
  - Be prepared with what you'll say or do if your safety needs are no longer respected.
  - Use objects to create social distance (i.e. standing behind your desk, a large bag, or a shopping cart, etc)



# Prepare for Ups & Downs

- Anticipate periods of reduced interaction with others. Have a plan for staying connected with loved ones while remaining socially distanced.



# Check in with yourself

- Keep a journal or set time aside each day to reflect
- What exactly are you struggling with? What's going well?

## 8 Dimensions of Wellness



# Tools for supporting others

*MHFA USA Founding Partner*



**Mental Health FIRST AID**  
**MARYLAND**

*from* NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

Learn more online at

[www.mhfamaryland.org](http://www.mhfamaryland.org)

Handout: Assisting Someone Distressed by  
the COVID-19 Pandemic

Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. This training gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem and help connect them to the appropriate care.



In the chat...

*How are you coping with the uncertainty?*

*In what areas are you okay? Is there anywhere you can you ask for help?*



# Asking for Help

- Transitions are difficult times, and research shows that we get through them more easily when we use our support systems.
  - Friends, family, social groups, local resources
- If experiencing extreme anxiety, or unable to complete daily tasks, reach out to a mental health professional.





National Institute  
of Mental Health

# ANXIETY

**Panic attacks are discrete episodes, with an abrupt beginning and specific end.**

## SYMPTOMS

- **Rapid heart rate**
- **Feelings of impending doom**
- **Feelings of being out of control**
- **Abdominal cramping**



# COVID-19

**If you develop these symptoms, call your doctor or visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).**

## SYMPTOMS

- **Fever**
- **Dry cough**
- **Trouble breathing**
- **Extreme fatigue**



## OVERLAPPING SYMPTOMS

- **Chills**
- **Shaking**
- **Sweating**
- **Chest pain**
- **Hot flashes**
- **Shortness of breath**





National Institute  
of Mental Health

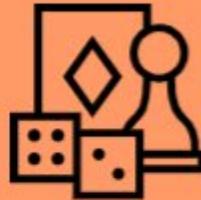
# Coping with COVID-19

**Take breaks  
from the news**



**Take care  
of your body**

**Make time to  
unwind**



**Connect with  
others**

**Set goals  
and priorities**



**Focus on  
the facts**

<https://www.virusanxiety.com/>



# CARE FOR YOUR CORONAVIRUS ANXIETY

A PROJECT BY  shine



# Resources

- **Counseling Warmline: 443-608-9182**  
*Available 10am-8pm on weekdays, 10am-6pm on weekends. Speak with a caring call specialist, a licensed mental health professional, who will listen to your concerns. Free and confidential. If no one answers, leave a message with your name and number and they will call you back.*
- *Contact your insurance provider for counseling services in your area*
- **Psychology Today Therapist Finder:** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>
- **SAMHSA Mental Health Treatment Facility Locator**  
Toll-Free: 1-800-789-2647 (English and español)  
<http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/MHTreatmentLocator>



# Resources

## Online Recovery & Wellness Support Resources

- Available free Statewide and beyond.
- Full list from BHA available [here](#).

Need immediate help? Call 2-1-1 press 1 for the mental health crisis line.



# Resources

## Baltimore County Peer Support resources

- Available free to the County Community. Full list available [here](#).
- Support and a listening ear provided by people with lived experience in areas such as: mental health, addiction, gambling, family member of someone with substance use or mental health problems, veterans, and living with disabilities.

## Find Your Local Wellness & Recovery Center

- <https://www.onourownmd.org/s/wellness-and-recovery-organizations>



# COVID Connect

## COVID Connect

Read testimonials from other Marylanders who have had Covid, discover clinical trials in which you may be eligible to participate, educate yourself on the newest Covid-related information, and connect with others who have also suffered personal impact in this pandemic.

Webinar Series: New content every Thursday. Includes topics on mental health, wellness, and recovery.

Virtual support groups for COVID survivors meet twice a month.

Learn more at <https://covidconnect.health.maryland.gov/>

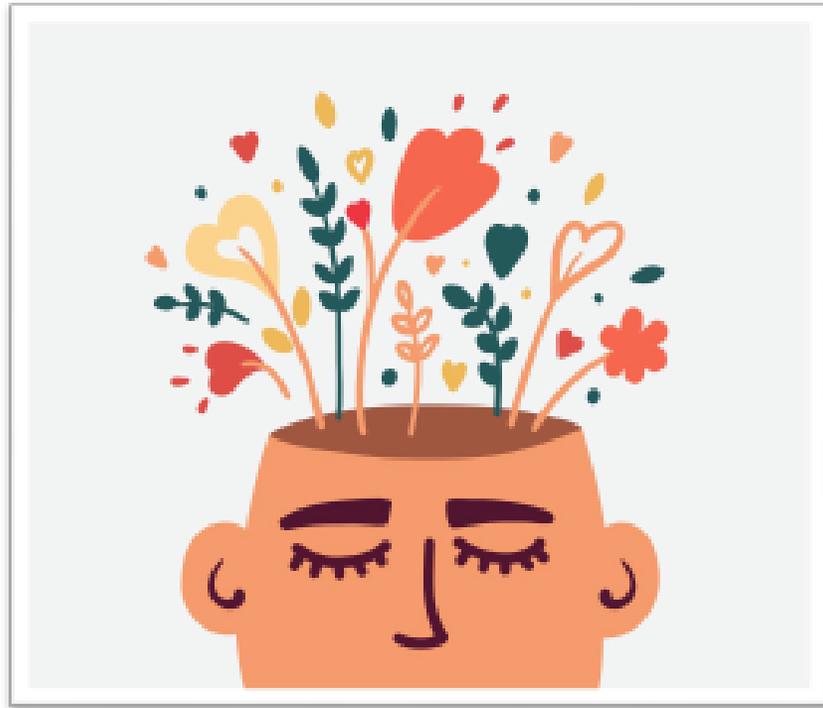


# Finding Support

-Go to [mhamd.org/coronavirus/get-help-now](https://mhamd.org/coronavirus/get-help-now) for tips on accessing telehealth and in-person behavioral health services.

-If you're concerned about your stress or mental health, take an online mental health screen and get connected to resources that can keep it from getting worse: [screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools](https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools)





Your mind matters.  
Look out for it during this transition.





# Thank you!

Casey Saylor, MSW  
Older Adult Project Manager

[csaylor@mhamd.org](mailto:csaylor@mhamd.org)

443-901-1550 x213

# For more information...

## COVID-19 Pandemic: Mental Health Effects on Older Adults and their Health Care Providers

Hosted by Smith Life Communities in Summer 2021.

- [Recorded Session I](#): Lessons Learned: Risk and Protective Factors
- [Recorded Session II](#): Mental Health Support for Healthcare Professionals
- [Recorded Session III](#): Our Journey Through The Pandemic

