

## Ways to Cope with Strong Feelings Related to COVID-19

A Community Strengthening Event  
Presented Digitally by  
Putnam Clubhouse and  
The Hume Center

by Chris Celio, PsyD  
April 9, 2020

## A bit of caution...

- ▶ This is a public forum on digital technology
- ▶ Privacy cannot be guaranteed
- ▶ This is a public workshop, not psychotherapy
- ▶ The material of this training may stir up feelings that you are not prepared to cope with. If you are unsure of where to get support from or feeling in crisis, calling **211** in Contra Costa County not only reaches the county's Crisis Line but can also help you with resources and homeless services. You can also call the California Peer-Run Warm Line at **1-855-845-7415**. More resources will be shared at the end of this powerpoint.
- ▶ For anyone out of the area, **1-800-SUICIDE** is a national crisis line if you need to access help

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## Coping through Music and Community

Many thanks to our performers!



Natalie Amaya

[www.natalieamayavoice.com](http://www.natalieamayavoice.com)

Alicia Glenn

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## Reducing Trauma through Language

A balance must be struck between language that encourages caution and language that increases trauma, dread, and panic.

More Triggering	Less Triggering
• Quarantine	vs. Social Distancing
• Shelter in Place	vs. Stay Home Order
• Pandemic	vs. Virus
• Isolated	vs. Safe at Home



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## Ground Rules for Today

- ▶ Joking is okay, teasing is not
- ▶ Keep language respectful (no swearing)
- ▶ Things we won't talk about today:
  - Politics
  - Who is to blame for the virus and its spread
  - Star Wars Episode IX
  - People who are not social distancing correctly
- ▶ The presentation will be mostly a monologue until the end when we'll have a discussion and community check-in
- ▶ Be ready to answer a few polls honestly. They are anonymous.
- ▶ The powerpoint is available online for download at [www.humecenter.org](http://www.humecenter.org)

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## Q1: Why Is This So Hard?

### Results for Poll Question #1

- It's Unthinkable
- It's Unprecedented
- It's Unhealthy
- My Usual tricks for wellness aren't working
- I'm Ungrounded

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## How is Your Foundation?

The body likes to stay in homeostasis, meaning it likes to be able to keep things the same

- ▶ Life as Expected vs Unthinkable
- ▶ Prepared for Usual Tragedies vs. Unprecedented
- ▶ Healthy Routines and Behaviors vs. Unhealthy
- ▶ I Generally am Effective at Maintaining Wellness vs. My Usual Tricks for Wellness Aren't Working
- ▶ Grounded vs. Ungrounded

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## It's Unthinkable

- ▶ Traumatic natural events disturb our conceptions of ourselves and the world. It impacts our view of:
  - Our invulnerability
  - An orderly world
  - Our positive self image
- ▶ This in turn impacts our view on the meaning of life and what our own fate will be

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## It's Unprecedented

- ▶ Everyone is just guessing about what the outcome of this will be, with wild formulations of what will happen.
  - This fuels our worries to spin out into panic attacks
- ▶ Since this one is new and the outcome is unknown, previous virus outbreaks are now talked about constantly, adding to our dread
- ▶ The American Dream is being threatened (we're "first world" so "it" can't happen here)

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## It's Unhealthy

- ▶ If you made a list of unhealthy behaviors, our current lives would check off a lot of those boxes
  - Isolation
  - Lack of exercise
  - Lack of human connection
  - Detachment from daily activities
  - Detachment from daily routine
  - Lots of screen time
  - Stress of new technology problems that are suddenly vital
  - Disrupted routines plus stress => disrupted sleep => more disrupted routines and stress= vicious cycle

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## My Usual Wellness Tricks Aren't Working

- ▶ Our usual supports are busy, staying home, distracted, or closed/limited
- ▶ Our usual distractions are postponed (sports, activities, concerts, live and new television)
- ▶ Our usual pampering options are closed (dessert, spa/salon, movies)
- ▶ Our providers have changed how they provide services

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## I'm Ungrounded

- ▶ Every level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has been impacted.
- ▶ Maslow's theory says humans can't focus on higher needs if lower needs are not met. But this situation has impaired each and every level:
  - Physiological Needs
  - Safety
  - Love and Belonging
  - Esteem
  - Self-Actualization

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## I'm Ungrounded at Every Level

- ▶ **Physiological Needs:**
  - Air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing (and toilet paper)
- ▶ **Safety:**
  - Personal security, employment, resources, health, property
- ▶ **Love and Belonging:**
  - Friendship, intimacy, family, sense of connection
- ▶ **Esteem:**
  - Self-esteem, respect, status, recognition, strength, freedom
- ▶ **Self-Actualization:**
  - Desire to become the best one can be

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## Level 1: Physiological Needs

- ▶ **Air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing**
  - Open the windows
  - Stay hydrated and eat as healthy as possible
  - Ask for help acquiring food if necessary
  - Use all available new laws around utilities, rent, evictions, and mortgage payments to keep your home and services
  - Maintain a regular sleep schedule
  - Change your clothes as usual/dress like you're going out
  - Get out of the house and walk (following all applicable laws and health recommendations)

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## Level 2: Safety Needs

- ▶ **Personal security, employment, resources, health, property**
  - Wear proper personal protection equipment, wash your hands, and sanitize
  - Know your rights as an employee and learn about current unemployment/disability benefits  
[https://www.edd.ca.gov/about\\_edd/coronavirus-2019.htm](https://www.edd.ca.gov/about_edd/coronavirus-2019.htm)
  - Learn proper screening for COVID-19 and follow doctor's/nurse line advice
  - Maintain a healthy living space
  - Make a budget and stick to it

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### Level 3: Love and Belonging Needs

- ▶ Friendship, intimacy, family, sense of connection
  - Schedule video hanging out daily with friends and family
  - Take advantage of fun video events like today's Zoom Concert
  - Share your hobby or interests online
  - Block out distractions when making time for loved ones (digital communication includes easy digital distractions if you let it)
  - The people you're living with need time together and time apart

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### Level 4: Esteem Needs

- ▶ Self-esteem, respect, status, recognition, strength, freedom
  - Is it time to
    - take up a hobby, read a book series, try a new skill, take a fun online class, write a story, compose poetry, join a book club, watch a movie on Netflix together. Many things are free right now.
    - <https://www.audible.com/ep/FreeListens>
  - Do you have a skill to share digitally?
  - Can you write letters or send nice messages to others?
  - Perhaps try watching some fun tutorials on YouTube about a skill you want to learn, like the countless Learn to Draw videos available.

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### Level 5: Self Actualization Needs

- ▶ Desire to become the best one can be
  - or
- ▶ The realization or fulfillment of one's talents and potential
  - Or
- ▶ That feeling you have when you hike a tall mountain and look at a beautiful sunset over an expansive valley
- ▶ This might be a challenge currently. Take the pressure off and let these moments come as they do. Find fulfillment in small things and in your ability to cope through this

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## Level 5: Self Actualization Options

- Helping others can bring Esteem and Self Actualization, but you need to do it safely
- <https://californiavolunteers.ca.gov/get-involved/covid-19/>
- 3D print face shields for healthcare workers
- Create an online resource list
- Locate food and supplies for others
- Sew masks for the public and healthcare workers



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## Q2: What thoughts or feelings have you had recently?

### Results from Question 2

I've been feeling too much  
 I've been feeling too little  
 I've been feeling all over the place  
 I'm feeling too fast  
 I'm looking to punish someone  
 The future is canceled  
 I can't take this  
 I've gotten to know myself...and I don't like myself  
 Nobody likes me / No one is there for me  
 I feel like crying all the time

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## Q3: On what day did you start to feel overwhelmed by COVID-19?

### Results from Question 3

Local schools were closed on March 13, 2020 and the Stay at Home Order went into effect on midnight on Tuesday, March 17, 2020. On what day did you start to feel overwhelmed by COVID-19?

- February 1, 2020
- March 1, 2020
- March 6, 2020
- March 17, 2020
- March 24, 2020
- April 2, 2020
- April 7, 2020

<https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-body>

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## Thoughts and Feelings

### ► Beware of Victim Thinking

- Victim thinking is a normal response to trauma but it can hold you back from recovery
- It can lead to pronounced feelings of helplessness and hopelessness that are hard to shake free of
- Victim thinking is maintained because we believe it's helping us, but there are other ways to think that are more healthy and effective



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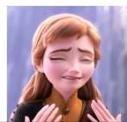


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## Thoughts and Feelings

### ► "I've been feeling too much."

- "I felt like crying and I don't know why."
  - But it wasn't for no reason and it felt great, didn't it?
  - These are unprecedented times; your emotions will keep trying to help you through it in possibly unfamiliar ways
- Three levels of Grief
  - Level 1: Financial, Emotional, Medical/Physical, Philosophical/Spiritual
  - Level 2: Loss of Power or Control
  - Level 3: Mortality and Fear of it
- Tips to Try
  - Talk to someone about your feelings
  - Embrace change as best you can
  - Try free meditation apps
    - [www.uclahealth.org/ucla-mindful](http://www.uclahealth.org/ucla-mindful)
    - [www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app](http://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app)



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## Thoughts and Feelings

### ► "I've been feeling too little."

- "I feel great, not much has changed, haven't shed a single tear."
- Turning off one emotion turns them all off, so if you've been trying to avoid your anxiety or other feelings you may have turned off your positive emotions
- Victim Thinking: Denial of problems or the impact of trauma
- Tips to Try
  - Try creative outlets like drawing or writing to help unlock some emotions
  - Listen to a friend about how they're feeling and see if anything feels familiar
  - Connect with your body through stretching or yoga (YouTube has free yoga on it, try it)



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## Thoughts and Feelings

- ▶ “I’ve been feeling all over the place.”

- As the energy in your emotional tank got to Empty, has it been harder to keep up your positivity or not get sucked into the negative?
- Have you found that weeks of bad news has left you raw?
- Is that raw nerve leaving you jumping from feeling to feeling.
- Victim Thinking: Others/issues are all-good or all-bad.
- Are you sometimes able to cope well and other times find your coping skills lacking?
- Tips to Try:
  - Plan daily ways to refill your emotional tank
  - Don't fight your emotions: embrace the pendulum a little
  - Try some physical exercise



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## Thoughts and Feelings

▶ “I’m feeling too fast.”

- Exploding on others much?
- Speaking or buying or making decisions impulsively?
- Our survival instincts spur us to select solutions quickly when we're threatened, so you'll need to slow yourself down
- Trauma usually brings up other feelings of unresolved anger or guilt and they can hit you all at once or start a spiral
- **Tips to Try:**
  - Slow down and try some breathing techniques
  - Use a budget and a financial plan
  - Resist retail therapy and panic buying
  - Unresolved feelings probably need some attention, love, and compassion



## Thoughts and Feelings

- ▶ “I’m looking to punish someone.”

- Are you looking to find a target for your feelings/despair?
- We do this especially when we need the world to make sense. We were designed as animals to break the world down into what is and isn't a threat, so looking to blame someone makes sense.
- Be careful, you might target your roommate or yourself.
- Victim Thinking: Intolerance of mistakes in others and self
- Remember, internet trolls are home 24/7 too
- Tips to Try:
  - Beware of getting into online arguments that could consume you or cost you a friendship
  - Pay attention to large or unexpected outbursts or attacks and try to find the real feelings



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## Thoughts and Feelings

► “The future is canceled.”

- The power of anticipation is lost...for now. Most events are not canceled, just postponed.
- Victim Thinking: Trauma can make us feel like things will be this bad forever and will never change
- Focus on the positive message that everyone is staying home to make society safer
- Tips to Try:
  - Make a list of things you are looking forward to doing later
  - eSports, online concerts, book readings, interviews, and other events are still happening
  - Get involved in video events being put on by friends, businesses, and service providers



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## Thoughts and Feelings

► “I can’t take this.”

- Yes, you can, but it isn’t easy.
- Be kind to yourself and cut yourself and your friends and family a little slack.
- Victim Thinking: Emotions can be overwhelming and take over our thoughts.
  - Terror, anger, powerlessness
- Tips to Try:
  - Rotate through coping skills and strategies
  - Focus on all you’ve accomplished so far during this situation
  - Schedule distractions and positive interactions



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## Thoughts and Feelings

► “I’ve gotten to know myself...and I don’t like myself.”

- Too much down time, especially while experiencing a trauma, can lead to negative self-talk and negative feelings about yourself.
- Be kind to yourself.
- You’re the author of your own story; write yourself as the hero. Heroes are never perfect. It’s how heroes overcome challenges that make them great. Be the hero of your story.
- Tips to Try:
  - Give yourself a break and aim for good-enough instead of perfect
  - Write a few things a day that you like about yourself. Review the list periodically.



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## Thoughts and Feelings

▶ “My panic is echoing.”

- There is little else for the media to talk about, so the news has become an echo-chamber of bad news
- There is little else for your friends to talk about, so social media has become an echo-chamber of bad news too
- Tips to Try
  - Limit your exposure to the coverage of the virus
  - Actively search out fun, lighthearted, and uplifting people, channels, videos, etc
  - Be a source of positive content for others



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## Thoughts and Feelings

▶ “Nobody likes me.”

- Victim Thinking: This is a trick from being isolated.

▶ “Nobody is there for me.”

- Maybe less people are there for you, but not nobody.

◦ Tips to Try:

- If you start thinking this way, reach out to your support network until you find someone who proves you wrong
- Be there for others
- Collaboratively plan ahead for time to connect with others



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## Take Inventory

▶ Questions to Ponder

- What have you learned about how Victim Thinking can distort your view of the world and your view of yourself and others?
- What have you learned about yourself?
- Which emotions do you struggle with?
- What are your most trying situations today?
- Do you have any unfinished emotional work to do?
- How has this changed your view of the world or humanity?

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## You Can Do This!

- ▶ Actively work on strategies to maintain your wellness throughout this experience
- ▶ Create a daily schedule that includes time for
  - Getting dressed and continuing daily hygiene activities
  - Fun
  - Reaching out to others
  - Exercise
  - Enjoying time alone
  - Hobbies/education/trying new things
  - Cooking and eating well
  - Cleaning and organizing your home
  - Shopping
  - Sleep

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## You've Got This!

- ▶ Try to mix in some healing self-care
  - Laughter (yes it's okay to laugh through tough times)
  - Pamper yourself (take a long bath, take a short nap)
  - Enjoy some healthy comfort food
  - Watch whole seasons of shows
  - Enjoy great music
  - Drink some tea (beware of caffeine keeping you up at night)
  - Meditate
  - Play games (beware of in-app purchases, addicting apps, becoming too competitive, and getting overloaded on screen time)
  - Read a book
  - Do some sort of art, craft, or other creative activity

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## You've Got Help!

- ▶ <https://www.7cups.com/> free online text chat for emotional support
- ▶ <https://emotionsanonymous.org/> an international fellowship offering weekly online meetings
- ▶ <https://www.supportgroupcentral.com/> low- and no-cost virtual support groups in English and Spanish
- ▶ <https://support.therapytribe.com/> online peer support
- ▶ forlikeminds.com: online support for partners/friends of people with mental health challenges
- ▶ <https://18percent.org/> free peer-to-peer online support community
- ▶ <https://psychcentral.com/> resources, quizzes, and an "Ask the Therapist" function
- ▶ <https://freeclinicdirectory.org/> a locator of free clinics

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## Contra Costa Resources

- ▶ <https://cccc.myresourcedirectory.com/> 211 Database for Contra Costa
- ▶ <https://sites.google.com/lincolnfamilies.org/covid-19/> A local resource guide curated by Lincoln for COVID-19 resources
- ▶ <https://cccgis.link/Food> To help you find food, Contra Costa County has a new GIS (global information system) mapping tool. It can be used on any mobile device, just like searching for the nearest gas station or cafe on your phone. It was developed by Contra Costa's IT Department and 211
- ▶ <https://legalaidatwork.org/blog/relief-funds/> Resources for undocumented workers in California.
- ▶ <http://www.humecenter.org/all-headlines/203-stay-connected-through-these-fun-events-for-all-on-zoom-in-april> Check back here for more Hume community events
- ▶ <https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/> Official Contra Costa County news and information about COVID-19

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## Lunchtime Karate!

- ▶ If you enjoyed today's community event, you're welcome to join us again next Thursday for Luncheon Karate! <https://zoom.us/j/174497985>
- ▶ Sensei Geoff Mires of Mires Martial Arts is going to offer a lighthearted beginners karate workshop on 4/16/2020 from 12:30 to 1pm to get everyone moving and laughing while we cope through this Stay Home order together.

- Participate in Lunchtime Karate at your own risk. Karate is a physical activity that includes natural physical risks to those participating. Mires Martial Arts, Hume Center, and Sensei Geoff Mires take no liability for everyone's health, injuries, or ability to complete the light warm ups and karate drills without injury.

## Lunchtime Vocals!

- ▶ We are excited to entertain you with the passionate singing of Clarisse Saam, a local legend in theatre and song. She will bring to life songs from the theatre and radio! Join virtually with others during lunchtime and feel a little lighter through the power of music and community!
- ▶ To access this event on Thursday, April 23, 2020 at 12:30pm, click this Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/777885299>

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# We've Got This Together!

- ▶ You are not alone!
- ▶ Putnam Clubhouse is one of countless agencies putting on virtual events to help you through this and they've even been delivering food and supplies.

- ▶ <https://www.sfstress.com/blog/how-to-make-sure-social-distancing-and-self-isolation-dont-hurt-your-mental-health>
- ▶ <https://www.sfstress.com/blog/practical-ways-to-deal-with-worrying>
- ▶ <https://www.sfstress.com/blog/6-tips-for-surviving-the->

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