



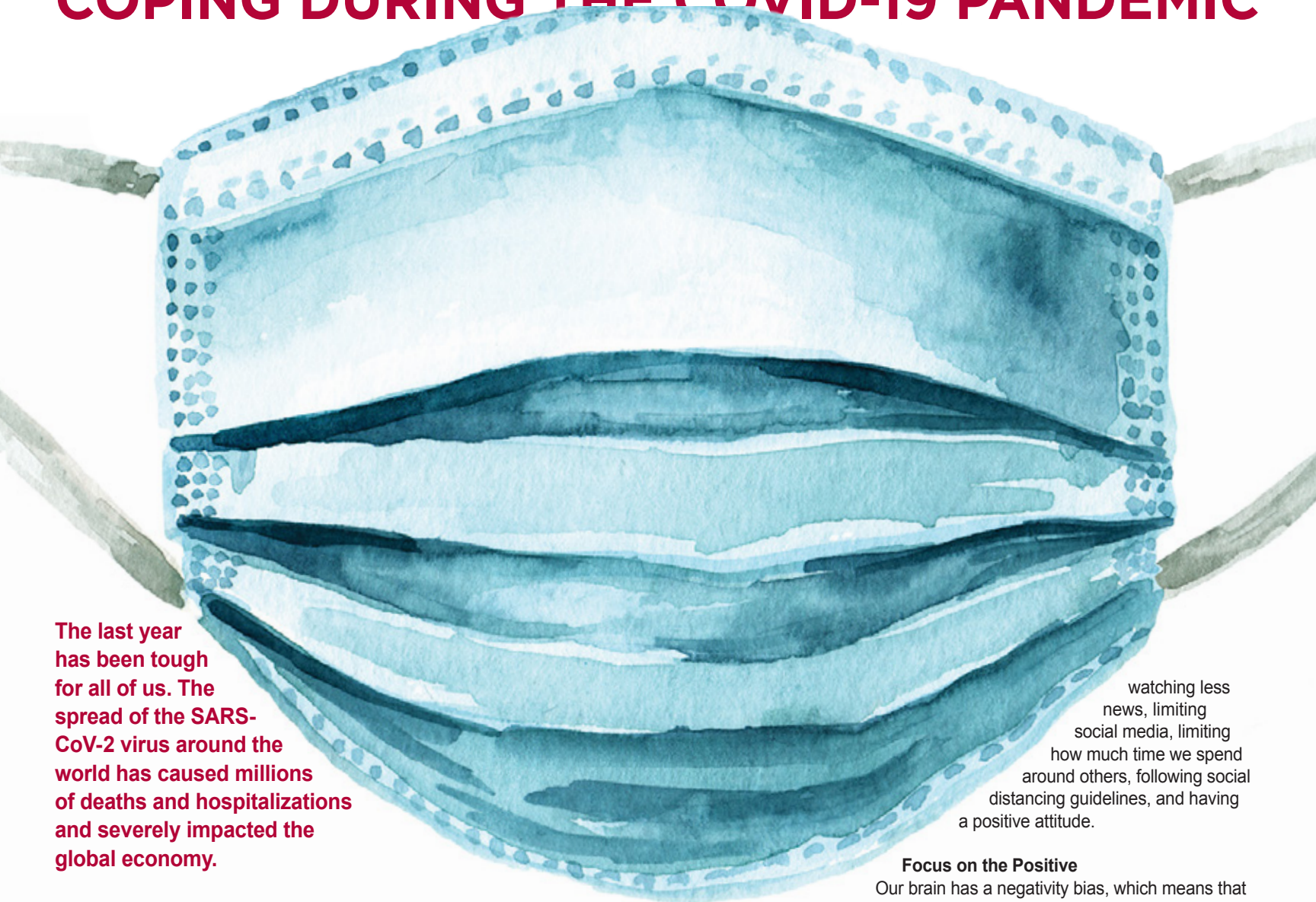
EMPLOYEE

ASSISTANCE NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2021

PROVIDED BY SAINT ALPHONSUS EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

COPING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



The last year has been tough for all of us. The spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus around the world has caused millions of deaths and hospitalizations and severely impacted the global economy.

Along with COVID-19's medical and economic toll comes a mental health toll. Many of us have been forced to work from home and have been restricted from seeing our family and friends. Our normal social outings, which often provided a respite during stressful times, have been very limited and just don't feel the same as they used to. With the pandemic going on for over a year, the isolation from others and restrictions on our normal stress relieving activities has taken a mental toll on all of us. It's in times like these that we must develop new coping skills to get us through this temporary hardship.

Here are some coping skills that can help you make it through the pandemic:

Focus on What You Can Control

Focus your time and energy on the things you can control and let go of the things you can't. Many things that we worry about are things that are out of our control, such as whether people will wear masks and keep six feet away from us or how long the pandemic will last. By focusing on what is in our control, we can feel more empowered and less anxious. Things that are in your control include

watching less news, limiting social media, limiting how much time we spend around others, following social distancing guidelines, and having a positive attitude.

Focus on the Positive

Our brain has a negativity bias, which means that our mind tends to focus on the negative things that happen to us more than the positive things. The negativity bias is meant to protect us from the bad things of the world, but it's often overused. To counteract the negativity bias, force yourself to think about the positive things in life. It can be helpful to think of the worst-case scenarios, then the best-case scenarios, and settle on something in between. This will usually be the most realistic outcome.

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Saint Alphonbus
A Member of Trinity Health

EAP MISSION Saint Alphonbus Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a voluntary, confidential counseling service that assists employees and their families with issues that affect their quality of life at home and work.



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Here are some other positive thinking activities:

- Three Good Things exercise. At the end of each day, write down three good things that happened that day. It can be something small, like seeing the sunrise, or something big, like a raise at work. This exercise helps us to remember that good things do happen each day
- Gratitude journal: Write in a gratitude journal once or twice a week to keep track of the things that happen each week that you're grateful for
- Write down what you are excited to do once the pandemic is over. Write down your plans for the summer, what concerts you want to go to, the family or friends you want to visit, and where you want to travel

Get Enough Sleep

According to the National Sleep Foundation, most adults need 7-9 hours of sleep a night to avoid daytime drowsiness, impaired concentration, and low energy. Aim for that much sleep each night. One to two hours prior to bed, unplug from email, news, social media, and anything else that creates a busy mind and begin focusing on creating a calm, relaxing environment. Turn down the lights and do

things that are relaxing. Relaxing activities can include reading, listening to music, or a listening to a meditation app. As you fall asleep, close your eyes and listen to a story on a sleep app like Calm, listen to a podcast, or listen to a documentary on Netflix. Keeping your mind busy by listening to a story will grab your mind's attention and keep it from ruminating about the things you did today and the things you need to do tomorrow.

Stay Connected

The pandemic has severely reduced our ability to socialize with others. Socializing allows us to connect with others, helps us to feel less lonely, and increases our happiness and sense of well-being. These activities can help you meet your socialization needs during the pandemic:

- Make online video-conferencing calls with family and friends using Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime
- Meet up with a friend while taking recommended precautions for safety by wearing masks, keeping six feet away from each other, and meeting outside

- Host a Netflix Teleparty and watch movies and TV shows with friends virtually
- Host a dinner with others virtually using FaceTime or Zoom

Exercise

Exercise is one of the fastest ways to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Exercise reduces levels of the body's stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol, and stimulates the production of endorphins, chemicals in the brain that are the body's natural painkillers and mood elevators. Exercise has the added benefit of helping us become healthier and increasing our self-confidence. Here are some exercises almost anyone can do during the pandemic:

- Ride a bike, go for a run, or hike in the foothills
- Visit a city park and walk its trails
- Walk or bike the Greenbelt
- Dance to your favorite music or create a virtual Zoom dance party
- Jump rope or do jumping jacks

Seek Help from Professionals

If you are still feeling anxious or depressed after performing these coping activities, it may be necessary to seek professional help to get you back to your normal functioning. Talking with a Saint Alphonsus EAP counselor or obtaining psychiatric medication from a medical professional can get you back to feeling your normal self.

APPLESAUCE-OAT MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS

- Muffin:**
- 1 1/2 cups instant oatmeal
 - 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
 - 1 teaspoon baking powder
 - 3/4 teaspoon baking soda
 - 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 - 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
 - 1 egg white
 - 1 cup applesauce
 - 1/2 cup milk
- Topping:**
- 1/4 cup instant oatmeal
 - 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
 - 7/8 tablespoon ground cinnamon
 - 1 tablespoon melted butter

DIRECTIONS

- Step 1**
Preheat an oven to 400° F (200° C). Grease 12 muffin cups, or line with paper mu in liners. Whisk together 1 1/2 cups oatmeal, the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and 1/8 teaspoon of cinnamon in a mixing bowl; set aside.
- Step 2**
Whisk 1/2 cup brown sugar, egg white, apple-sauce, and milk together in a mixing bowl until smooth. Stir in the flour mixture until evenly moistened; it's ok if small, dry lumps remain. Pour the batter into the prepared mu in tin. Stir the 1/4 cup oatmeal, 1/4 cup brown sugar, 1 tablespoon cinnamon, and the melted butter in a small bowl; sprinkle this mixture over the muffins.
- Step 3**
Bake in the preheated oven until golden and the tops spring back when lightly pressed, about 20 minutes. Cool at least 10 minutes before serving. Yield: 1 dozen.

NUTRITION FACTS

Per Serving (12 servings): 169 calories; protein 3.6g; carbohydrates 34.6g; fat 2g; cholesterol 3.4mg; sodium 169.6mg.



DEPRESSION IN TEENS

It can be difficult to differentiate between typical teen angst and depression.

In general, being a teen can be tough, especially when navigating the impacts of COVID-19. Many teens under “normal” circumstances struggle with depression, often far more than many of us realize. It is estimated one in five adolescents from various walks of life will suffer from depression at some point during their teen years. While depression is highly treatable, most depressed teens don’t receive or have access to help or support.



While it’s true that moodiness and rebellion tend to be expected during teen years, it’s important to note that depression can also cause moodiness and behavior changes. Depression in teens can be exhibited in the following ways:

- Negative effects of depression go beyond melancholy mood
- Depression can destroy the essence of your teen’s personality, leading to overwhelming sadness and/or anger
- Many rebellious or unhealthy attitudes and behaviors may indicate depression
- Acting out to expression or control emotional pain may look like one or more of the following:
Problems at school, running away, use of drugs and/or alcohol, low self-esteem, addiction to technology, reckless behavior, and/or violence

Signs and Symptoms of Depression in Teens
Unlike adults, who have the ability to seek help or support on their own, teens rely on parents, teachers, coaches, friends, or other caregivers to recognize their suffering and get them the help they need.

Keep in mind, teens with depression don’t necessarily appear sad. Oftentimes they present as highly irritable, angry, and agitated. Symptoms of depression in teens include but are not limited to:

- Sadness or hopelessness
- Irritability, hostility, anger
- Tearfulness or frequent crying
- Isolation from friends and family, maybe some but not necessarily all
- Loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy
- Poor school performance
- Changes in sleeping and/or eating patterns
- Reports or observations of restless or agitated behaviors
- Indications of worthlessness and guilt or burdensomeness
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of energy, general fatigue
- Body aches and pains
- Difficulty with focus or concentration
- Thoughts or comments about death or suicide
- Giving away important items
- Extremely sensitive to criticism

If you notice your teen is showing signs of depression, feel free to contact Saint Alphonsus EAP to set up free counseling sessions or access one of the resources below for additional support.

Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline
[\(208\) 398-4357](tel:2083984357)

The Trevor Project
www.thetrevorproject.org
Through a toll-free telephone number, text, online chat, and social media site, the Trevor Project provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) young people under 25.

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
www.nami.org
NAMI provides advocacy, education, support and public awareness so that all individuals and families affected by mental illness can build better lives.

EAP COUNSELORS SAINT ALPHONSUS EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



Jared Belsher – Supervisor
MA, LCPC, NCC

Jared is a licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC) and national certified counselor (NCC) who has worked in outpatient mental health clinics and in private

practice since 2007. He received a bachelor’s Degree in Political Science and a master’s Degree in Community Counseling from Northern Arizona University. His approach to counseling is strength-based, which means that rather than dwelling on

things that are wrong, he focuses on the strength individuals have, and how they can use those strengths to overcome their obstacles. He uses a person-centered approach and additional counseling techniques such as cognitive-behavioral

therapy (CBT) to help clients discover healthier ways to cope and think about a problem.

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INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND COVID-19

The past year has been difficult in so many ways, impacting us all in one way or another.

With my clients, I hear daily about the additional stressors that are placed on their relationships. One area that appears to have greatly worsened is the increase of intimate partner violence (IPV). One in four women and one in ten men experience IPV in its many forms, including physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological abuse. As a result of the social isolation, loss of contact with friends and family, shelter unavailability, schools closing and governmental agencies shutdowns, the numbers of those impacted by IPV have exponentially increased. The COVID-19 crisis has made it more difficult for victims of IPV to contact, let alone secure, safer circumstances. There are many signs that someone may be in an abusive relationship; however, one of the most common is that the person being abused is often isolated from others. The pandemic has certainly made IPV sufferers even more victim to social isolation, and far less likely to reach out for help.

The increased stress related to job and financial instability, lack of childcare as many children are attending classes virtually, and lessened connection to family and friends for help are factors that have certainly led to greater incidents of violence among couples as well as against children. The pandemic certainly did not make someone become abusive, but for those who have already struggled with being a perpetrator of IPV or domestic violence, it has only heightened the frequency and intensity of the abusive behavior and its forms. Many of the people who are abusive to their partner were most likely already relying on fragmented sources of support prior to the pandemic, in some cases now leaving these individuals with no help at all.

IPV affects all races, ages, sexual orientations, financial status, and geographies. Unfortunately, the Coronavirus pandemic has left those who have

often been our most vulnerable community members even more vulnerable. There are ways to help support someone you suspect may be a victim of IPV. Often there is a great deal of shame associated with being an IPV victim, so offering an open door to a conversation with someone you are concerned about can be a good start. Simple questions such as “How are you doing during this crazy time?” or “How is your family doing, how have you noticed the quarantine/pandemic impacting all of you?” You can also provide an opening to a more personal conversation by sharing some about how the pandemic has impacted you and your close relationships.

Lastly, there are local and national resources someone can call to get help if they are experiencing an abusive relationship:

LOCALLY:

The Women and Children’s Alliance:
www.wcaboise.org, (208) 343-7025

Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence: (208) 348-0419

Center for Justice: 1 (800) 669-3179

NATIONALLY:

Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741

National Domestic Violence Hotline:
1 (800) 799-7233

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline:
1 (800) 422-4453

And we at the Saint Alphonus EAP are here to help with free counseling: (208) 367-3300

EAP COUNSELORS

SAINT ALPHONSUS EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



Jenny Lee Doty, MSW, LCSW

Jenny Lee has been practicing as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker for nearly a decade. She has worked in the mental health field for more than 20 years in a variety of treatment settings including but not limited to schools, day treatment centers, hospitals, and local community agencies. Jenny Lee has provided treatment to children, pre-teens and teens, and adults in individual, group, and family settings.

Jenny Lee is skilled in working with complex family units, emotional and behavioral issues, trauma, depression, mood disorders, anxiety, co-occurring diagnosis, psychotic disorders, self-harm, suicidal ideation, gangs, and those involved with foster care and Child Protective Services. Jenny Lee practices from a strength-based approach to treatment, while using a combination of interventions tailored to meet each individual’s needs.



Melissa Young, MSW, LCSW

Melissa has been a Mental Health Professional for 30+ years having the opportunity to serve in a variety of mental health settings, with diverse client populations, working in various roles. As a Clinical Social Worker she has had the opportunity to work with survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence; as an Outpatient Psychotherapist within a Community Mental Health Center; a Peace Corps Volunteer in Asuncion Paraguay; Hospice Social Worker; and currently working as a Counselor at the Saint Alphonus Employee Assistance Program and Clinical Supervisor with Tidwell Social Work Services and Consulting Inc. She employs an eclectic approach to her work with clients, believing that a trusting and supportive relationship is key to any therapeutic success. In addition to her professional life, she is a mother of three teenage boys, wife of 18 years, and a proud dog and horse owner.

Saint Alphonus Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Regular Appointment Hours:
8:30 a.m.- 6:30 p.m., Monday-Friday
(special appointment hours by request)

Phone: (208) 367-3300

Location:
6140 W. Emerald St., Boise, ID 83704

Counselors:
Jared Belsher, MA, LCPC, NCC
Jenny Lee Doty, MSW, LCSW
Melissa Young, MSW, LCSW

