Strengthening Families as They Reunite in Uncertain Times
A Virtual Discussion
with Dr Susan Wehry
Thank you

For being here

For participating

For all you do

It’s good to be with you
Reflect on experience
Moving beyond (growing from) experience
Preparing for next phase
Nurturing resilience
(Trauma-informed care 101)
Open discussion
Creating virtual community

In a word…
How are you doing?
Creating virtual community

Your COVID experience
How long has it been?

- <1 month
- 1-3 months
- 4-6 months
- > 6 months
Looking back
Shared COVID experience
In residential and long term care

Closed to visitors
Closed to ancillary staff
Quarantined in rooms
Loss of communal experience
Uncertainty, shifting conditions
Insufficient PPE
Shared COVID experience
In residential and long-term care
Abiding the five

Intended consequences
Containment
Mitigation
Shared COVID experience
In residential and long term care

Unintended consequences
Distress
Loneliness
Deconditioning
Weight loss
Decline in ADLs
Families and Facilities have responded

With compassion
With creativity
With determination
With frustration
With sorrow

Some days were easier than others
We’ve grown tired
What we know

No one has been untouched

Disasters have a pattern

Recovery from disasters and from trauma have common elements

It’s not over yet and we need to nurture our resilience
We are remarkably resilient
We’re built for this.

We need to take charge.

Lend ourselves and others a hand as we enter this new phase.
1. Build reserves

- Know yourself
  - Stressors/De-stressors
  - Recognize your limits
- Take time for yourself
- Practice good self-care, kindness
- Strengthen your brain
Amygdala
Overactivated

Antidote
Remove stressor
Physical Exercise
Deep breathing
Mindfulness practice
ACC: Emotional Regulation

Underactivated

Overwhelmed

Antidote

Chill the amygdala

Acknowledge circumstances

Name your emotions

Practice gratitudes

Use mantras
PFC: Think, Plan, Solve
Wisdom
 Judgment
Offline

Antidote
Reboot
Exercise it
Solve for isolation

Strategize
- Self-care
- Care for staff
- Care for residents and families

Make meaningful
Practice flexibility
2. Actively plan for weeks ahead
   educate yourself
   small steps
   short intervals
   comfort objects
   stay in touch plan
Opportunities

Both/And

Safety and quality of life

Individual and community

Phasing in (Indoor) visitation

Re-examining compassionate visits essential visitors
Name concerns

Lack of privacy
Inability to touch
Different homes seem to have different rules
When you visit: What you may hear...

“I want to go home; I am so lonesome I just want to see you. This is awful.”

“I am lonely and feel like a prisoner”.

“All the staff work very hard and we’re proud of them. They all work hard to keep us safe.”

“The Administration will not create an area that is safe for us to go out, or assign staff to go and watch us. I miss visiting my friends and having group activities.”
What you might expect if your loved one is living with dementia

Increased sensitivity to feeling tone of others

Remember anxiety is contagious, so is calm

Sense of time passage will likely be different

Present/remote past may have more weight than recent past or future

Person-centered, individualized routines may have been lost

They may be thriving
What you might bring/what is needed

Anger, sorrow, frustration, grief, bewilderment, guilt, anxiety

Hope, love, compassion, desire, joy

Emotional regulation: Balance, confidence, evenness, openness, listening

Tuning in
Attune to your loved one

- Set tone: Calm is contagious/try deep breathing
- Set aside assumptions
Listen to their story
Acknowledge tears and laughter
Create areas that are calm and comfortable
2. Maintain connections

Connection is crucial - keep reaching out
With loved ones
With each other
Augment virtual
Postcards, pen pals

Share information
Assume good intentions
Acknowledge staff
Support connection in the face of isolation
3. Regain confidence

We are not powerless
Wash your hands
Wear a mask
Practice distanced socializing

Acknowledge loss, permit grief

Control what you can:
IDT care plan, “All About Me”

Provide options in daily living
Make decisions with the person
Connect residents with resources
Provide consistent, clear information
4. Make meaning

Tell stories

Talk about what is happening ≠ always talking about Covid-19

Scan for signs of beauty and hope

Practice kindness

Self and others

Participate in shaping the future: has there ever been such a moment?
Share information
REFLECT:

Think of one positive lesson or discovery about yourself
Nurturing resilience - in ourselves and in our loved ones - is an active process

- Building reserves
- Maintaining connections
- Regaining confidence
- Making meaning
We are in this together.
Thanks
Please stay in touch
Susan Wehry MD

Email:
swehry@une.edu
Twitter:
@beingwithaging
Facebook
@agingmegwep
Visit:
susanwehrymd.com
Let’s Chat