

Let's Talk About It:
Supporting Grandfamilies'
Mental Health and Emotional
Well-Being While Navigating
Pandemic Challenges

Thank you for joining us.
The webinar will begin shortly.



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COPING WITH ISOLATION, ENHANCING EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AND PROMOTING SELF-CARE FOR GRANDFAMILIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

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OPENING COMMENTS

- Covid has had a long reach and a strong grasp.
- It's greatly impacted our lives in so many difficult ways.
- It's profoundly affected our moods, behavior and thinking.
- For kinship families who've experienced earlier losses and traumas, this can be a very triggering experience.
- The never-ending quality of it adds to a sense of helplessness, vulnerability and worry.
- Personal losses caused by COVID, along with lots of social disruption, can easily overwhelm the ways we cope.
- Rates of depression, panic, anxiety, PTSD and suicide risk have increased exponentially as we adapt to this new way of living.
- Recent research attests to this.

OPENING COMMENTS

- What ways have we learned to cope effectively, take care of ourselves and protect our families?
- Who is in our support network, including culturally responsive care providers, that we can turn to for help?

[Frontiers | Psychological Consequences of Social Isolation During COVID-19 Outbreak \(frontiersin.org\)](https://www.frontiersin.org)

GROW RESEARCH WAVE I FINDINGS

- 164/600 caregivers said they were facing issues of loss, grief and trauma
- 168/600 caregivers said that helping their family with grief and loss was an essential priority
- Many families were dealing with children's behavioral health challenges, school and learning issues and needing counseling services which can be interrelated with loss and trauma.

Rosenthal,M, Littlewood,K, Langosch,D, Cooper,L, Fedus,D:
GrOW National Study of Grandfamilies During COVID 19:
Wave I and Wave II Results and Recommendations:
GrandFamilies Journal, Vol. 7, Issue, 1, 4-22

GrOW RESEARCH FINDINGS

WAVE II

TOP 5 SPECIAL ISSUES IMPACTING CAREGIVING DURING THE PANDEMIC

Child with Behavior Issues

Healthy Sleep for Myself

Counseling for Children

Birth Parent with Opioid or
Substance Abuse Issues

Child Care Issues

GrOW National Study of GrandFamilies During Covid 19, Wave II Results,
Presented at the Kempe National Conference, 2021

CAREGIVER NEEDS DURING COVID 19 IDENTIFIED IN GrOW WAVE II SURVEY



Covid concerns severely restricted social and recreational activities.

Not enough time for rest. Not enough breaks from children.

Mental health issues and physical health of children due to possible trauma responses.

Trying to juggle both work and school simultaneously and keeping everything running smoothly.

COPING WITH AND OVERCOMING SOCIAL ISOLATION

- Social distancing has meant having little contact with family and friends.
- COVID prevented personal and support networks from coming together.

[Social Isolation & Coronavirus: 11 Ways to Manage Your Anxiety \(webmd.com\)](#)

COPING WITH AND OVERCOMING SOCIAL ISOLATION

Tips to Feel Better

- Take action
- Take care of yourself
- Build in structure and routine
- Be social in innovative ways
- Spend quality time with family and friends
- Shift your mindset and try a new perspective
- Limit exposure to the news but find sources of trustworthy information
- Stay busy
- Enjoy the outdoors
- Think about where you can make healthy choices for yourself
- Help others
- Get help for yourself

WARNING SIGNS FOR RISK

- Feeling hopeless or not having a reason to live
- Feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about wanting to die or a plan to end their life
- Being a burden to others
- Overwhelming sadness, anxiety, distress, despair, anger or depression
- Behaving recklessly
- Starting or increasing alcohol or drug use
- Isolation & withdrawal from others or activities
- Significant sleep and eating problems

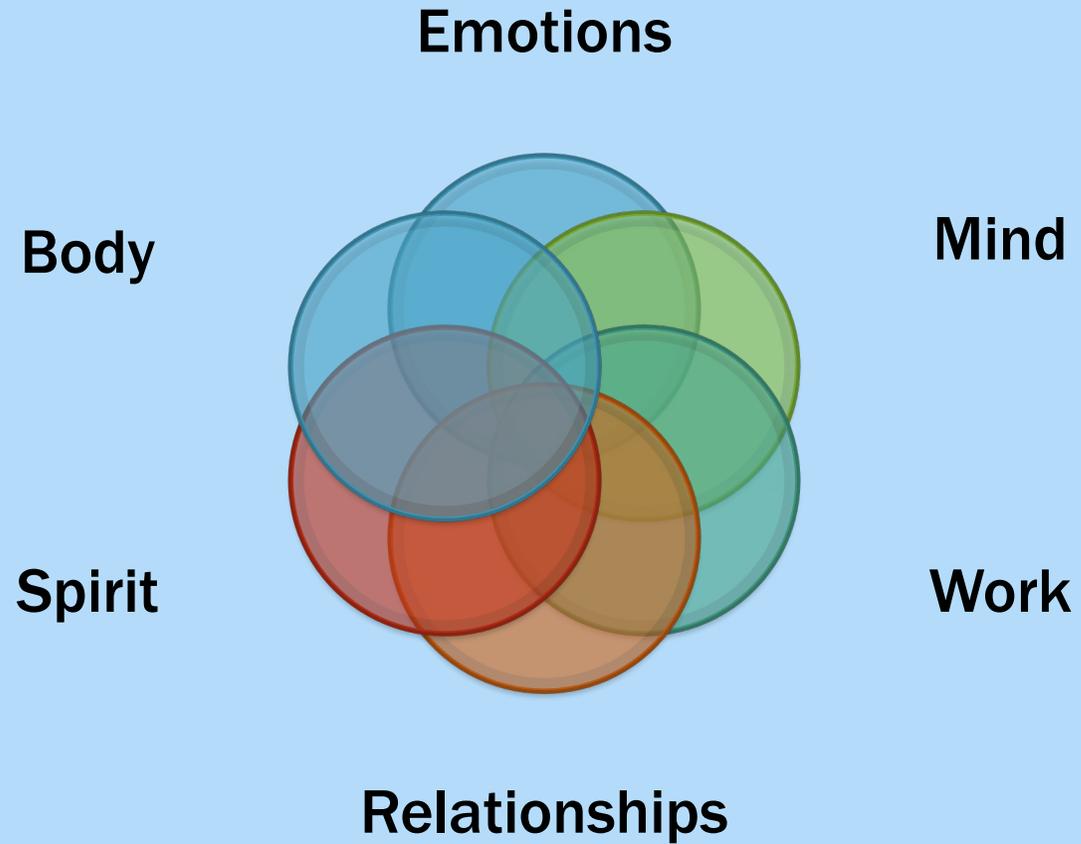
WARNING SIGNS FOR RISK

- Agitation or emotional outbursts
- Giving away prized possessions
- Saying good bye to loved ones
- Consider intensity, duration and precipitants

When in doubt, reach out!

Getting an assessment, a risk screening or a referral from a school counselor, social worker, therapist, helpline, clergy, support group leader and/or a pediatrician can make a major and sometimes lifesaving difference. It's well worth doing.

SELF-CARE



RE-FRAMING SELF-CARE

We know what can help but sometimes it's hard to do.
How do we figure out what to do to take care of ourselves?



What gets in the way? What works for you?
What are the small steps that you can take?

STRATEGIES

- Think about your strengths and ways to build resiliency
- Remember to breathe, especially to exhale
- Exercise
- Find ways to express and channel feelings
- Find creative and innovative ways to cope
- Make art, music, poetry, journal and dance
- Spirituality
- Self-care is essential. Re-fuel, talk to helpful friends and relatives
- Consider helping others in need. The return is great!

The Dahlia Lama said, “It is under the greatest adversity that there exists the greatest potential for doing good, both for oneself and others.”

MORE OPTIONS FOR SELF-CARE

- Apps- Calming, Mindspace, Headspace, Feeling monitor
- On-line chats – The Caregiver Space
- Be a vessel, instead of a container
- Take steps to protect ourselves and re-fuel
- Flexibility and resiliency

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROVIDERS

- Consider a kinship family's access to their support systems both informal and formal
- Validate their resiliency and protective factors
- Highlight how they've coped adaptively in the past when faced with adverse or overwhelming situations
- Identify where specific grief and mental health services can be found
- Help create linkages to these
- Hold on to and model hope

RESOURCES

- **State Kinship Navigators**
- **Suicide Prevention and Crisis Hotline -24/7: [Lifeline](https://www.lifeline.org) ([988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org))**
- **Psychology Today: Find a Therapist: [Find a Therapist, Psychologist, Counselor - Psychology Today](#)**
- **NCTSN**
 - [Pause-Reset-Nourish \(PRN\)* to Promote Wellbeing: Use as Needed to Care for Your Wellness! | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(nctsn.org\)](#)
 - [Taking Care of Yourself | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(nctsn.org\)](#)
 - [Secondary Traumatic Stress: A Fact Sheet for Child-Serving Professionals | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(nctsn.org\)](#)



RESOURCES

- **GrandFamilies Journal:** [GrandFamilies: The Contemporary Journal of Research, Practice and Policy | National Research Center on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren | Western Michigan University \(wmich.edu\)](#)
- **GrOW Website:** [GrOW \(Grandfamilies Outcome Workgroup\) \(grandfamilieswork.org\)](#)
- **Generations United:** [Generations United \(gu.org\)](#)
- **Grandfamilies.org:** [Home \(grandfamilies.org\)](#)

Grandfamily Caregiver Tip Sheets

Grandfamily Caregiver Tip Sheet: Self-Care



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There are 2.6 million children in the US who are living in households headed by a grandparent, another relative, or close family friend without a parent present, occurring inside or outside of the child welfare system. These families, often referred to as "grandfamilies", include approximately 30% of children in foster care being raised by grandparents or other relative caregivers.

Why Do Grandfamily Caregivers Need Self-Care?

When children come into the household, often unexpectedly, grandparents and other relative caregivers frequently put their own needs aside for the child they are raising. Many caregivers report being sleep deprived, having poor eating and exercising habits, not taking time to rest when they are sick, and not making medical appointments for themselves. Additionally, the COVID pandemic has brought additional stressors, feelings of isolation, and health concerns into the lives of grandparents. Self-care practices can help grandparents be the best caregivers they can be! Being exhausted and stressed all the time can lead to serious health issues and decrease your capacity as a caregiver. By taking some time to take care of yourself, you can protect your health, be an even better caregiver, and encourage healthy habits among your kids!

What is Self-Care?

Put simply, self-care is identifying your needs and actively taking steps to meet them in order to protect your personal well-being. When you care for yourself, you are also better able to care for others.



Challenges to Self-Care for Grandfamilies

- Did you know that more than one-third of adults aged 45 and older feel lonely, and nearly one-fourth of adults aged 65 and older are considered socially isolated?
- Grandfamilies disproportionately face barriers to self-care compared to traditional households. Grandparents and other older relative caregivers often live on fixed incomes, and many are forced to return to work to meet the additional costs of caring for a grandchild or multiple children. Difficulties include the cost of housing, food, transportation, respite and child care, and other financial barriers.

Grandfamily Caregiver Tip Sheet: Youth Mental Health



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Many grandfamilies have experienced trauma or have been formed as a result of trauma experienced by the children. Whether losing a loved one, being exposed to or experiencing substance use, experiencing verbal or physical abuse, and/or interacting with the child welfare system, these experiences can have a lasting impact on you and the children you are raising.



What are the Impacts of Childhood Trauma?

- More than two out of every three children in the US experience at least one traumatic event by age 16.
- More than half of the children in the child welfare system have had four or more [adverse childhood experiences \(ACEs\)](#), compared to 13% of the general population of children. While there is limited data on the number of ACEs among children in grandfamilies, children often enter grandfamilies as a result of many of same trauma-related reasons children enter foster care.
- People with four or more ACEs are 12 times more likely to have negative health outcomes in adulthood.
- Children who have experienced traumatic events may have learning difficulties, increased involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and long-term health problems.
- Trauma can also cause children to act out or misbehave, and it is a risk factor for substance use disorders.
- COVID-19 has resulted in many youth feeling socially isolated. For children who have experienced trauma, social isolation may exacerbate their mental health challenges and behavioral issues.

Thank you!

For more information visit

www.gu.org

You will receive an email with a link to the recording of this webinar.

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