

# SELF CARE FOR THE CAREGIVER

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# THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC IS RESULTING IN

- Multiple losses
- This causes us to experience grief
- We need to understand our reactions in context of normal grief
- Risk factors for complicated grief
- How to help ourselves
- How to help those we care for

# THE LOSSES WE ARE ALL EXPERIENCING

- Safety
- Social connections
- Jobs
- Financial security
- Predictability of the world
- Family get togethers
- Funerals/weddings/graduations
- Routines
- Hugs, touching and seeing others face to face instead of mask to mask
- Plans for the future
- Availability of essential items like toilet paper
- Loss of school, day programs, group home
- Loss of staff/change of staff
- Death of friends and family

# GRIEF FROM A COVID 19 DEATH

- Some of you are also dealing with the death of a loved one from Covid 19. There is no ability to visit a loved one in the hospital or nursing home who is dying, to have a funeral or memorial service, and to grieve with others. Grief is often postponed as well because of the amount of energy that goes to dealing with the pandemic. Those of you who work with those with intellectual disabilities may be dealing with multiple deaths.

# WHY IS EVERYONE FEELING DEPRESSED, OVERWHELMED, AND ANXIOUS?

We are all experiencing many losses. Let's quickly review the normal symptoms of grief...

# EMOTIONAL

- sadness
- anxiety
- anger
- guilt
- moodiness
- fear
- relief
- disbelief
- shock
- denial
- loneliness
- apathy
- inability to have fun
- insecurity

# MENTAL

- forgetfulness
- poor concentration
- trouble making decisions
- changed sense of identity
- loss of role
- loss of future dreams
- regrets
- loss of sense of humor
- dreams and nightmares
- constant worrying

# PHYSICAL

- exhaustion
- crying
- change in sleeping and eating patterns
- pain, headaches
- weakness
- over activity without purpose



# RISK FACTORS FOR COMPLICATED GRIEF

- Social isolation
- Unexpected death
- Multiple losses
- Sudden and unexpected losses
- Inadequate social support
- Past history of depression and/or anxiety
- Concurrent major life stressors, such as financial difficulties

# DUAL PROCESS THEORY OF GRIEF BY STROEBE AND SCHUT

- Grief is a dynamic process in which you alternate between focusing on the loss and avoiding thinking about it
- It is not healthy to grieve 24/7
- Both expressing feelings and controlling feelings are important
- Take breaks from grief
- Strive for balance – while keeping safe and following precautions, also focus on gratitude and what is still normal in your life
- There are even some benefits of isolation – all those projects you have done that have been on your “to do” list

# SELF CARE - YOU WILL BE OF MORE HELP TO OTHERS IF YOU TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF!

- Take as good care of yourself as you do of others in your life!
- Keep a regular sleep schedule
- Eat Healthy
- Avoid excessive alcohol or recreational drugs
- Exercise regularly
- Limit consumption of news about the pandemic
- Have regular social contact by phone, zoom, facetime, and in person
- Utilize daily calming techniques through prayer, music, meditation, yoga
- Work on living in the moment, don't think too far ahead
- Take time daily for a hobby, for FUN! Remember fun?
- Find ways to laugh – humor helps with stress relief
- Focus on what you can control

# HELPING THOSE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

- Try to keep routines as normal as possible
- Try to maintain continuity of staff
- Explain the pandemic in terms they can understand
- Self talk is normal for many people with intellectual disabilities – allow it
- Include them in life-changing decisions when possible
- Identify ways they can help others
- Model good grief – don't deny it but don't let it dominate the day

# SUMMARY

- Our reaction to the Covid 19 pandemic can be understood in terms of the many losses we are experiencing and the risk factors for complicated grief which are endemic to this experience. We need to prioritize our self care in order to function well, cope, build our resilience, and be of support to others.



**Wellbeing Strategies for Today**  
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# What is the healthiest choice I can make right now?

## Nourish your body in all ways:

- Eat lots of veggies, fruits, whole grains and other plant based foods
- Minimize processed foods and sugar
- Listen to hunger cues
- Hydrate with water and non-sugary beverages
- Get adequate rest and sleep
- Avoid harmful substances like tobacco and nicotine. Careful moderation of alcohol if it is part of your lifestyle.

## Mindful

- Learn to live in the present moment
- Listen to your body and give it what it needs (rest, movement, food, play)
- Practice deep breathing and grounding techniques to manage stress
- Gratitude



## Connect to:

- Family and Friends
- Community
- Job/Career
- Financial Wellbeing
- Personal Values
- Nature and the environment

## Incorporate Movement

- Activity built in throughout the day
- Planned, purposeful exercise to elevate heart rate, build strength and maintain flexibility
- Recreation

# Nourish Tips

Stock up on these budget friendly healthy non-perishables

- Low sugar/sodium canned fruits and vegetables
- Frozen fruit and veggies without added sugar, sauce or butter
- Dried beans, legumes and whole grains

Keep your immune system strong with these nutrients

- Fill every plate half with fruit & veggies for vitamins A & C
- Fortified cereals, sunflower seeds and some nut butters for vitamin E
- Whole grains, lean meats, seafood, bean and nuts for zinc

Maintain a healthy weight

- Listen to hunger cues and eat only when hungry
- Stay hydrated
- Use small plates, glasses and pre-portion snacks to minimize mindless eating

Ways to Nourish Your Body

- Include lots of fruits, veggies and plant based foods into your meals. Minimize processed foods and sugar consumption.
- Rest. Strive for 7-8 hours of sleep each night
- Drink plenty of water and other non-sugary drinks
- Avoid using tobacco and e-cigarettes (vaping).

# Movement Tips

## Tips for being more active at work

- Be ready anytime (keep sneakers at work and have walking meetings or calls).
- Take the stairs, walk to the furthest rest room, take stretch breaks throughout the day.
- Get up and move for a few minutes every hour.

## Planning Exercise

- Strive for 30 minutes of exercise every day (broken up in 10 or 15 minute sessions if necessary).
- Find enjoyable activities and do them!
- It's not just about cardio. Focus on flexibility, balance and strength too.

## Tips for working out at home

- Mix it up – try new classes or activities.
- Find workouts that require no equipment.
- Set up a workout space that is convenient, inviting and visible.

## Make it a community

- Find a buddy and workout together in person or virtually.
- Share your success with others; post on social media or share with a friend what you did to stay active.
- Join a wellness challenge community.

# Mindfulness Tips

## Deep Breathing

- Taking a few deep breaths helps you *respond* instead of *react* to a stressful situation.
- Inhale for a count of five, pause, exhale for a count of six.
- Feel the sensation of your breath going in and out of your body. Note where you feel it the most. Notice how your body relaxes.

## 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise for Managing Anxiety

- Describe 5 things you see around you.
- Name 4 things you feel right now (e.g. your feet on the ground, air on your skin).
- Name 3 things you hear right now.
- Name 2 things you smell (or two smells you like).
- Name 1 good thing about yourself.

## Staying focused

- Set up your day by writing your to do list.
- Commit your attention to a single task.
- Check in with your feelings throughout the day and make adjustments (take breaks, modify goals and expectations to fit the situation).

## Start with intention and end with gratitude

- Start the day with an intention-what is important to you? How do you want to feel?
- Practice a purposeful pause during a routine activity. Notice your surroundings and how you feel.
- Note at least one thing you are grateful for at the end of the day.

# Connection Tips

## **Connect to your health:**

- Follow all age and gender recommendations for preventive health screenings.
- Get two dental cleanings per year.
- Take any medications as prescribed, and follow all care plans for existing health conditions.

## **Connect to your future:**

- Focus on your financial wellbeing. Have a budget and a financial plan for what is most important to you.
- Commit to life long learning, formal and informal.

## **Connect with family and friends**

- Use technology to stay in touch. Host virtual game nights, viewing parties or weekly calls with grandparents.
- Celebrate milestones big and small!
- Bring multiple generations together.

## **Connect with your community:**

- Volunteer with a community organization.
- Donate blood.
- Join a club, or faith based community.
- Support local businesses.

Just Be



# The Power of Occupation: The link between doing what you love and your health

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<https://www.pvcomplededentistry.com/blog/2014/01/brushing-teeth-in-correct>



<http://gettelex.com/take-your-reading-to-the-next-level-in-2020-a-book-challenge/>



<https://www.theadders.com/career-advice/making-your-coffee-this-way-may-add-years-to-your-life>

# Occupations



<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/training/ways-you-might-be-ruining-your-dogs-walk/>



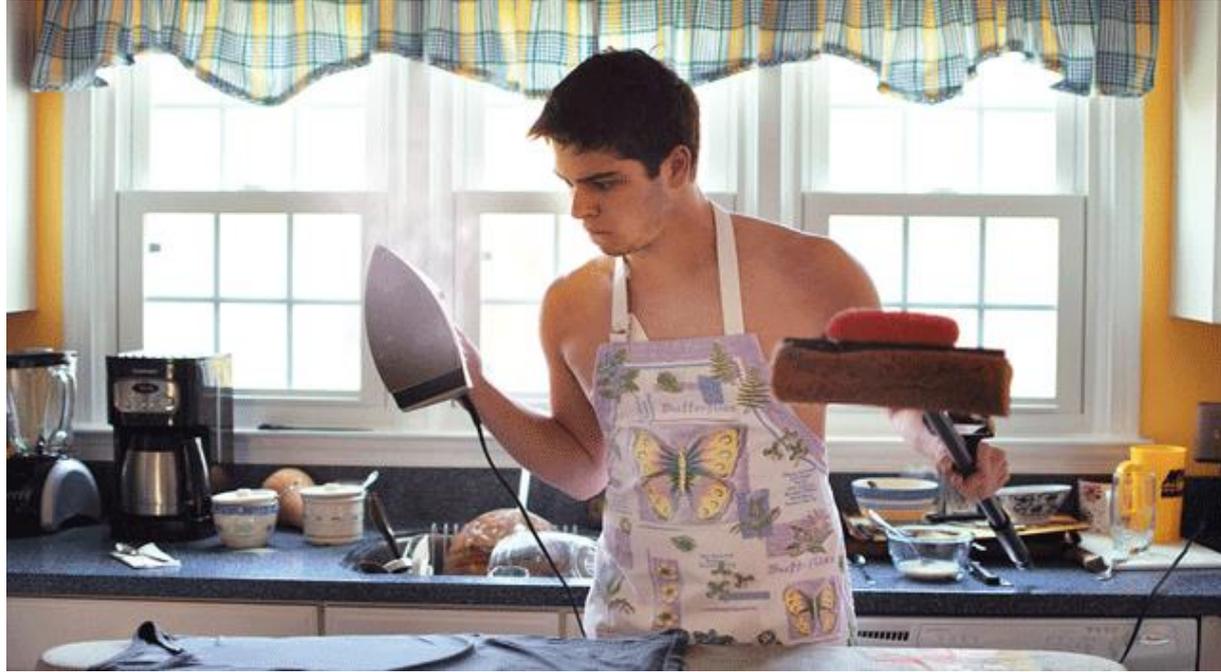
<https://greatist.com/move/how-much-yoga-to-see-results>



<https://www.insurancehotline.com/resources/tips-for-drivers-to-avoid-the-risks-of-driving-licensed-or-uninsured/>

- Occupational therapy practitioners
  - Value the familiar and ordinary things people do everyday
  - Understand the meaning of occupations to each person
  - Appreciate the connection of occupation and health
  - Use occupations therapeutically

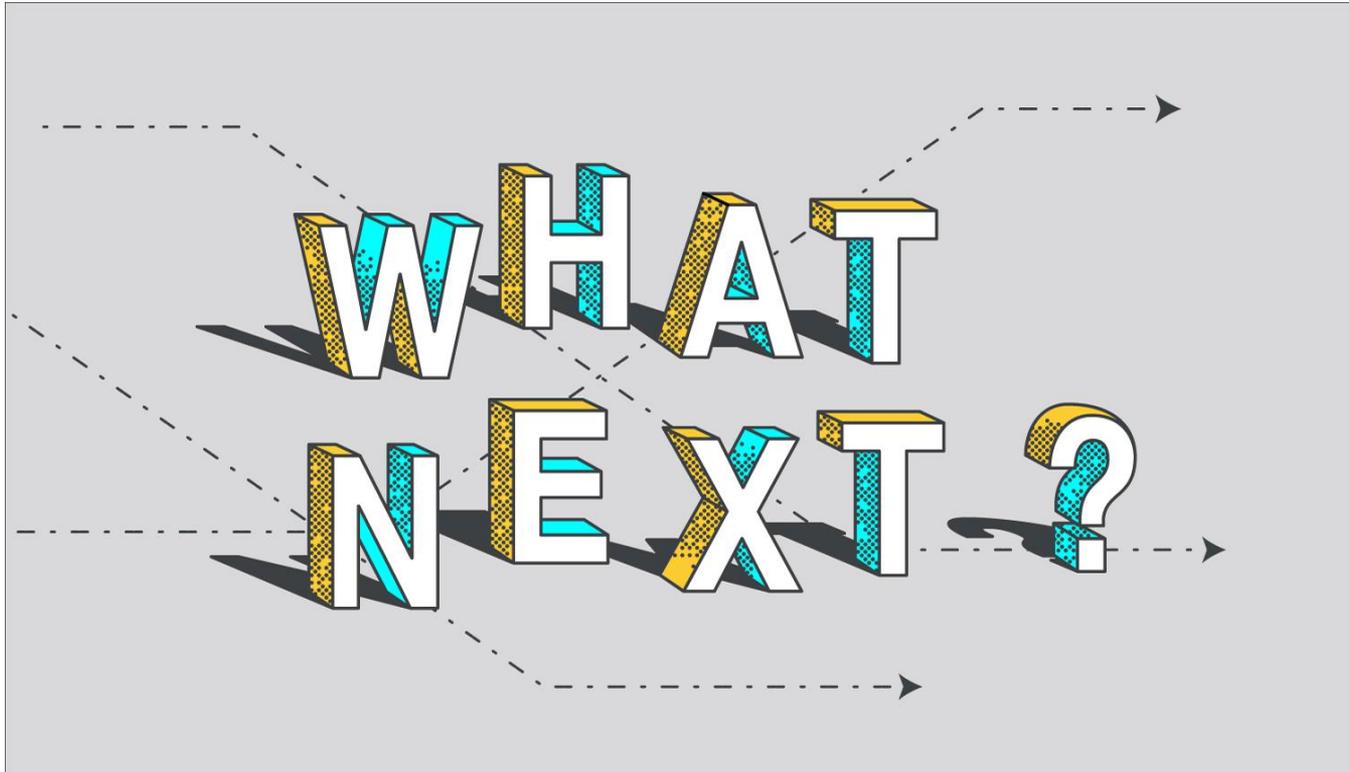
***Roles*** are a set of behaviors expected by society, shaped by the culture and defined by the individual (AOTA, 2014)



<https://medium.com/@deborahkristina/house-husband-c503f43d173c>



<https://clarksvillenow.com/local/clarksvillenow-quick-guide-covid-19-closings-cancellations-and-changes/>



<https://bulldogcatholic.org/series-what-next/>

# Occupational Balance

“A balance of engagement in occupation that leads to well-being.

For example, the balance may be among **physical, mental** and **social** occupations;

between **chosen** and **obligatory** occupations;

between **strenuous** and **restful** occupations, or between **doing** and **being.**”

**Wilcock (2006)**

An Occupational Perspective of Health. 2nd ed. Thorofare, NJ: Slack

## Occupational Balance



theOThub.com



# Occupational Balance

- Is subjective in nature (Backman, 2004)
- Promotes high quality of life (Christiansen & Townsend, 2004)
- Promotes health and wellbeing  
(Wagman & Hakansson, 2014; Wagman, Hakansson & Jonsson, 2015)
- Impacted by time and time use  
(Stamm et al., 2004; Wagman & Hakansson, 2014)



# Achieving Balance

- Reflect on your lifestyle, daily routine, habits, patterns
- *What is missing?*



<https://www.istockphoto.com/photos/missing-puzzle-piece>

# Achieving Balance

- Make a plan
  - Wellness calendar
  - Prioritize
  - Say “no”
- Track your progress
- Monitor the changes

## 30 DAYS OF WELLNESS

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
SET 3 GOALS TO ACHIEVE IN THE NEXT 30 DAYS	MAKE A WORKOUT PLAYLIST	FIND A MANTRA THAT EXCITES + MOTIVATES YOU	WEAR LIPSTICK OR LIPGLOSS TODAY	MAKE A SMOOTHIE FOR BREAKFAST	DRINK HALF YOUR BODYWEIGHT IN OUNCES	SPEND 10 MINUTES OR MORE OUTSIDE
LIST 3 THINGS YOU ARE THANKFUL FOR	FIND AN AFFIRMATION + REPEAT 10X	TRY A NEW RECIPE FOR DINNER	DECLUTTER A ROOM OR SURFACE IN YOUR HOME	SPEND 10 MINUTES OR MORE OUTSIDE	LISTEN TO AN INSPIRATIONAL PODCAST	PUT ON A SASSY PAIR OF SHOES
GO TO BED 30 MINS EARLIER THAN NORMAL	TAKE A SHORT WALK AFTER DINNER	READ 10 PAGES OF A BOOK	TAKE A BIT LONGER TO STYLE YOUR HAIR	GET RID OF 3 THINGS YOU NEVER USE	ENJOY A SPECIAL DRINK	TEXT A FRIEND SOMETHING SWEET
TAKE A RELAXING BATH	ADD FRUIT TO YOUR BREAKFAST	LISTEN TO A 5 MINUTE GUIDED MEDITATION	WAKE UP 10 MINS EARLIER TO DO SOMETHING FOR YOURSELF	WALK UP + DOWN THE STAIRS 3X	TAKE A SPECIAL PHOTO WITH YOUR LITTLE ONE	ADD AN EXTRA VEGGIE TO A MEAL
CUT YOUR CAFFEINE DOWN A BIT TODAY	TREAT YOURSELF TO SOMETHING YOU'VE BEEN WANTING					

# Achieving Balance

- Participation in valued activities
  - Promotes health and well being
  - Reinforces our identity and roles
  - Adds value and meaning
  - Enhances quality of life
  - May protect against cognitive decline  
(AOTA, 2014; Bherer et al., 2013  
Brookes et al., 2019; Burt & Atkinson, 2012)



<https://dailycaring.com/activities-for-seniors-with-alzheimers-10-inexpensive-diy-ideas/>

# Achieving Balance

- Embed activities together
- Be creative
- Do an activity for its own sake
- Do something creative
- Give to others
- Enjoy the experience



<https://www.boredpanda.com/funny-cake-fails-expectations-reality/>

# Tips for Success

- Be kind to yourself
- Set realistic, achievable goals
  - You can always modify
- Log your progress
  - Celebrate your success
- Take the first step
- Enjoy the experience



<https://sixtyandme.com/3-ways-to-keep-having-fun-in-your-60s/>



# Jefferson

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