

# “Psychological Impact of Social Distancing”

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**ROSS UNIVERSITY**  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

# Learning Objectives



After this lecture, students will be able to:

1. Define and describe the concept of social distancing and mitigation strategies
2. Discuss health anxiety and its role in mitigation strategies
3. Describe Health Equity and disparities, related to social distancing
4. Demonstrate knowledge of psychosocial relationship between disease, health care providers, government and general population

# Learning Objectives



After this lecture, students will be able to:

5. Define the psychosocial burden of quarantine, isolation, and social distancing on health-care providers, children, older adults, caregivers, marginalized community members, and the general public
6. Summarize the concept of toxic positivity and ways to instill hope and validation
7. List the signs and symptoms of stress on the body, mind, emotions, and behaviors
8. Compare the three primary methods of meditation and

# FLATTENING THE CURVE

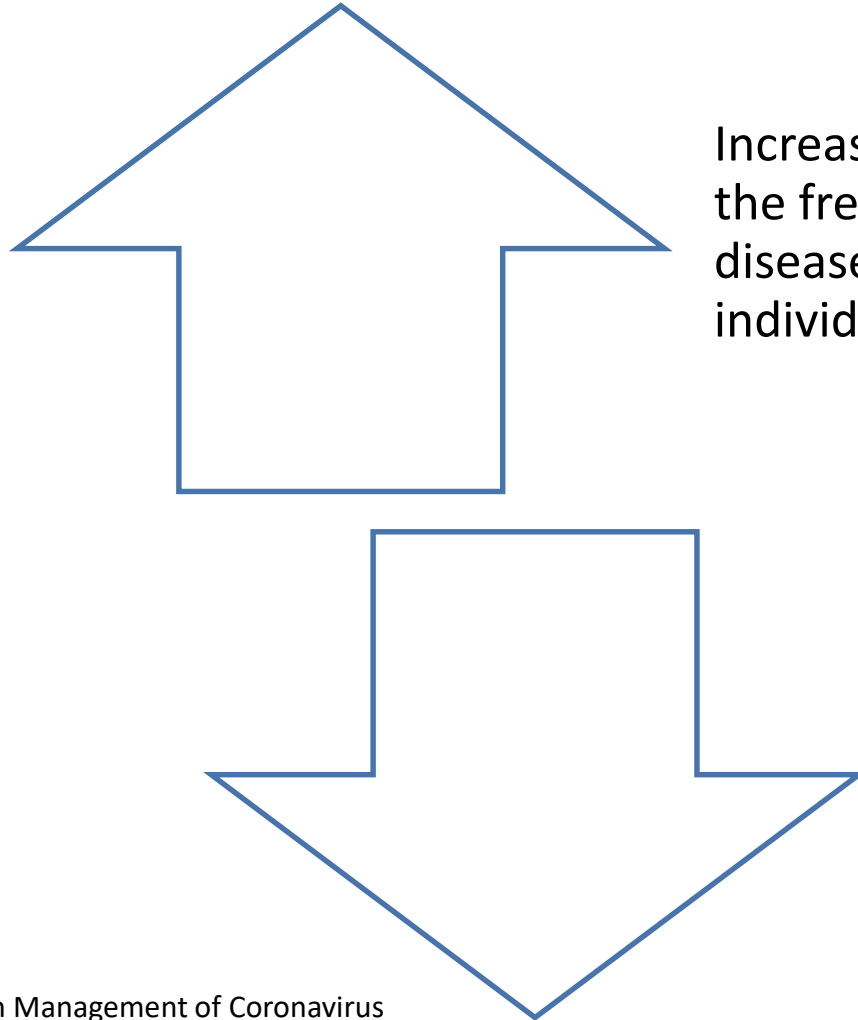
COVID-19

\* Imagery adapted from the CDC



Maragakis LL. Coronavirus, Social and Physical Distancing and Self-Quarantine. John Hopkins Health. 2020.

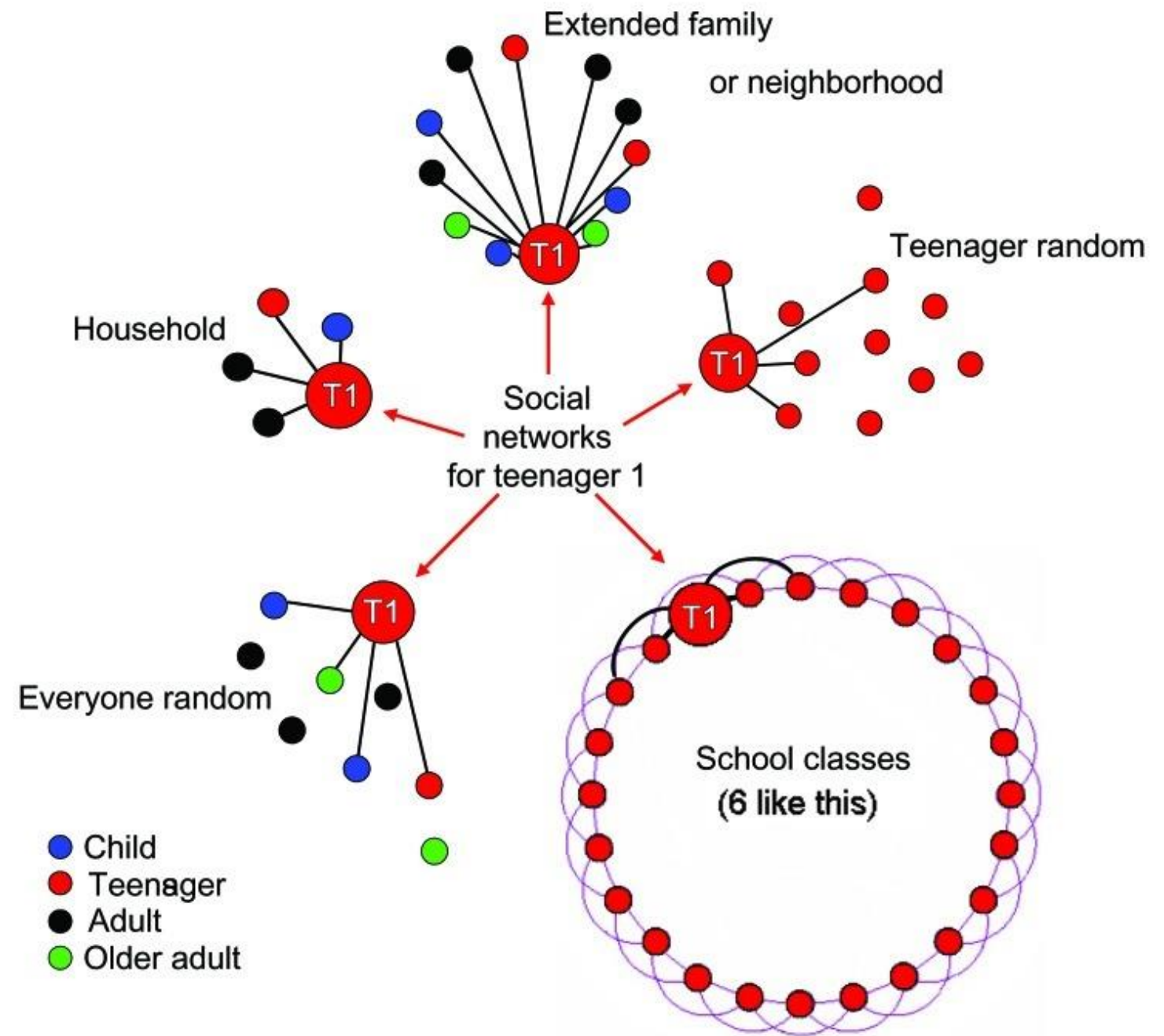
# Social Distancing



Increasing the space between individuals and decreasing the frequency of contact to reduce the risk of spreading a disease (ideally to maintain at least 6 feet between all individuals, even those who are asymptomatic)

Social distancing strategies can be applied on an individual level (e.g., avoiding physical contact), a group level (e.g., canceling group activities where individuals will be in close contact), and an operational level (e.g., rearranging chairs in the dining hall to increase distance between them)

# Targeted Social Distancing



Glass RJ, Glass LM, Beyeler WE, Min HJ. Targeted social distancing design for pandemic influenza. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2006;12(11):1671-1681. doi:10.3201/eid1211.060255

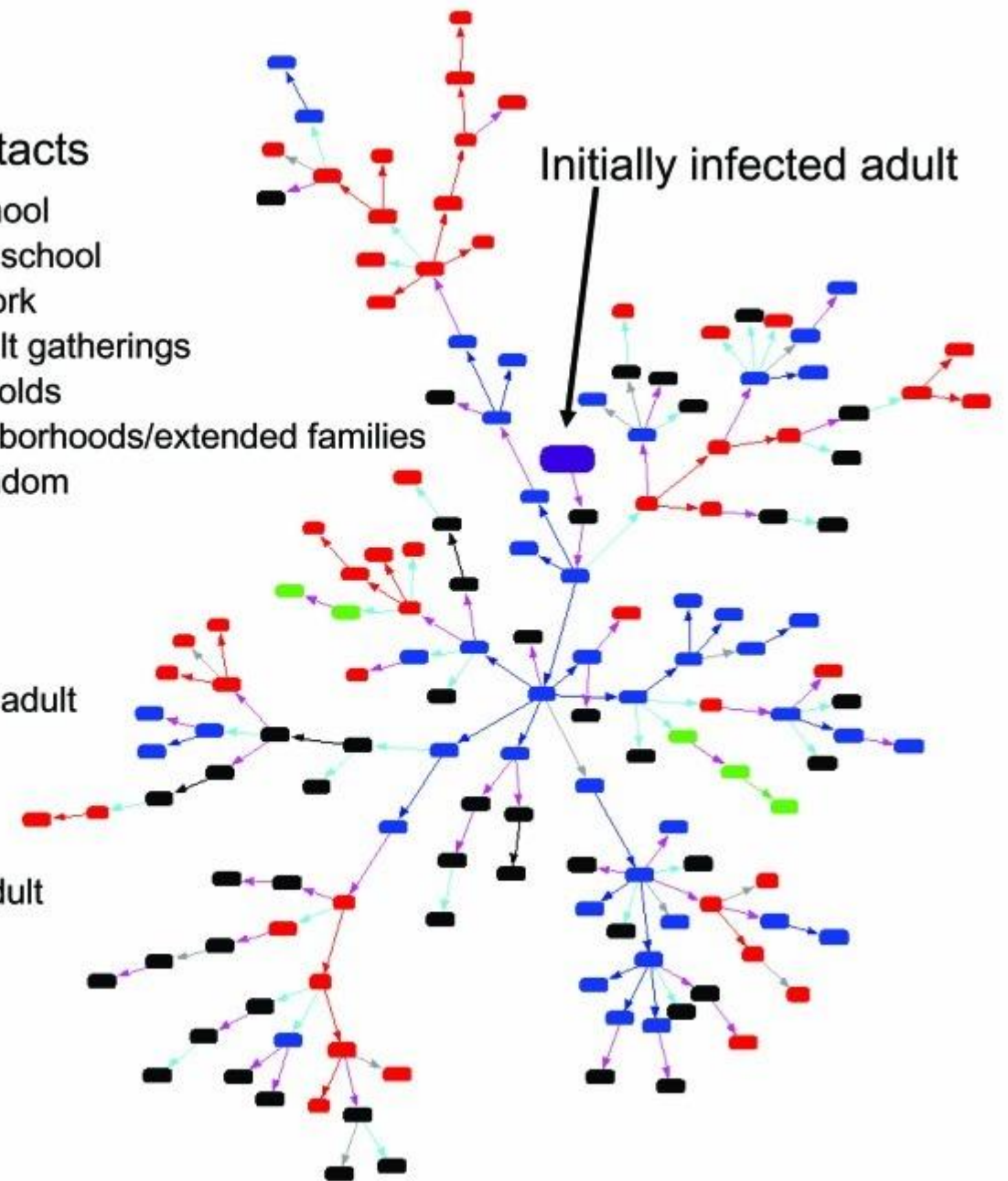
# Unmitigated Base Case

## Infectious contacts

- Children in school
- Teenagers in school
- Adults at work
- Older adult gatherings
- Households
- Neighborhoods/extended families
- Random

## Persons

- Initially infected adult
- Child
- Teenager
- Adult
- Older adult



Glass RJ, Glass LM, Beyeler WE, Min HJ. Targeted social distancing design for pandemic influenza. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2006;12(11):1671-1681. doi:10.3201/eid1211.060255

# Health Anxiety

## Low Health Anxiety

- Less likely to wash hands/sanitize
- Less likely to seek vaccination
- Unlikely to change social behavior
- Disregard recommendations for social distancing

## High Health Anxiety

- Catastrophic misinterpretations
- Dysfunctional beliefs and maladaptive coping behaviors
- Add undue burden/avoid to health care resources
- Excessive hand washing, social withdrawal, and panic purchasing

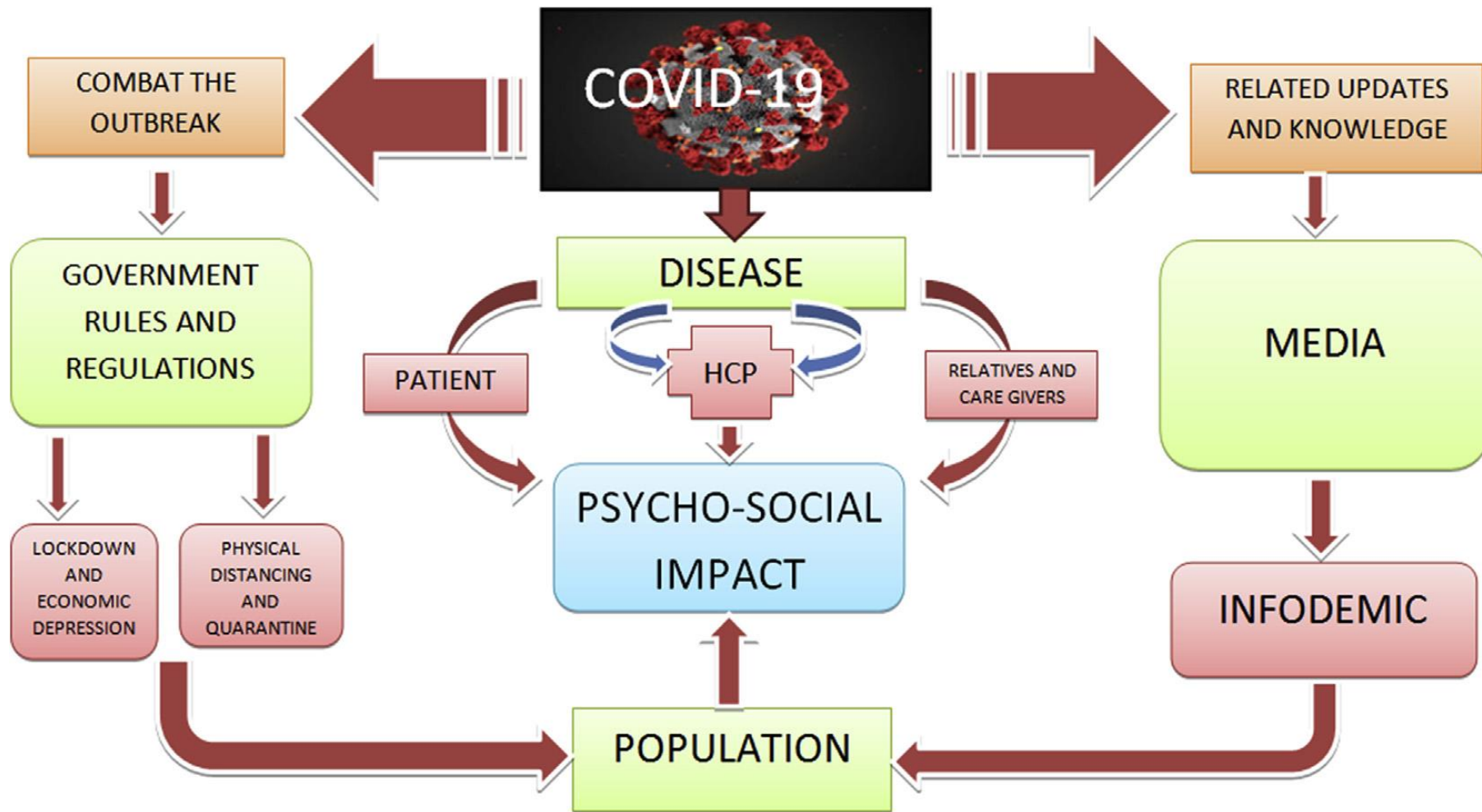
Asmundson GJ, Taylor S. How health anxiety influences responses to viral outbreaks like COVID-19: What all decision-makers, health authorities, and health care professionals need to know. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*. 2020 Apr;71:102211.



# Health Equity in a Pandemic

- Marginalized and minoritized patients have and will suffer disproportionately during the COVID-19 crisis
  - Race and ethnicity data collection and reporting is critical
  - Deep-seated inequities - potentially greater risk of severe illness, due to prevalent comorbidities such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension and asthma
  - Less likely to have health insurance, complicating their ability and willingness to seek treatment for illnesses
- Physician health
  - All physicians are experiencing unprecedented stress, including PTSD, burnout, secondary trauma, and moral injury
  - Minoritized and marginalized physicians may experience more acute distress given the compounding factors their patients are dealing with related to their physical and social well-being
  - Physician bias plays a critical role in health inequity and perpetuate structural inequalities - explicit or unconscious bias will determine if a patient gets proper testing and treatment

# Psychosocial Relationship between Disease, Health Care Providers, Government and Population



Dubey S, Biswas P, Ghosh R, Chatterjee S, Dubey MJ, Chatterjee S, Lahiri D, Lavie CJ. Psychosocial impact of COVID-19. Diabetes & Metabolic Syndrome: Clinical Research & Reviews. 2020 May 27.

# Psychosocial Impact of Quarantine/Social Distancing

## Children



- May be more demanding, impatient, hostile
- May suffer from physical, mental, or emotional abuse by overly pressurized parents
- May experience monotony, disappointment, lack of face to-face contact with classmates, friends and teachers,
- May experience a lack of personal space at home and family financial losses
- Trigger troublesome and even prolonged adverse mental consequences
- The interaction between daily-routine changes, home confinement, and fear of infection could further intensify these undesirable mental reactions resulting in a vicious cycle

# Psychosocial impact of Quarantine/Social Distancing

## Older Adults



- May experience anxiety, irritability and excessive feelings of stress or anger
- Older adults that are experiencing cognitive decline may become much more anxious, agitated, and socially withdrawn, demanding specific attention
- May suffer from physical, mental, or emotional abuse by overly pressurized care-givers

# Psychosocial impact of Quarantine/Social Distancing

## Homeless Population



- Face unique challenges
- Self-isolation, increased hygiene, home-confinement, and strict social distancing may not be feasible
- Many suffer from comorbid mental illness, substance use disorders, difficulties in accessing affordable health care
- May have anxiety and fright of forceful hospitalizations and imprisonments

# Psychosocial impact of Quarantine/Social Distancing



## Patients with pre-existing psychiatric illness

- Substantially prone and at risk of experiencing negative physical, as well as, psychological outcomes
- Cognitive decline, poor awareness level, impaired risk perception, and reduced concern about personal hygiene
- Prone to recurrence or deterioration
- Quarantine can interrupt treatment and access to medication
- Stepped care -delivering the most effective, least resource-heavy treatment to patients in need

# Psychosocial Impact and Suggested Interventions

Population	Psychosocial Issues	Intervention
<b>COVID-19 positive patients and quarantined individuals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loneliness</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Panic</li> <li>• PTSD</li> <li>• Depression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure communication-channel between patient and family</li> <li>• Delivery of progress-reports and discussion with families on further treatment plans through telephone, video-calls, WhatsApp, e-mail etc.</li> <li>• Close monitoring of mental state of quarantined persons using</li> <li>• In-time referral</li> <li>• Psychotherapy by stress-adaptation model</li> <li>• Psychiatric follow-up post-discharge, if needed</li> </ul>
<b>Health care providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of worthlessness</li> <li>• Guilt</li> <li>• Overwhelming work-pressure</li> <li>• Deprivation of family while being in quarantine</li> <li>• Burnouts</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Fear of infection and outcomes</li> <li>• Uncertainty</li> <li>• PTSD</li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support from Higher authority</li> <li>• Clear communication and regular accurate updates</li> <li>• Sustained connection with family and friends through smartphone</li> <li>• Shorter working duration, regular rest period, rotating shifts</li> <li>• Sufficient supply of appropriate PPE</li> <li>• Arrangements for well-equipped isolation wards specific for infected HCPs, insurance system for work-related injuries</li> <li>• Long term psychological follow-up</li> </ul>
<b>Children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boredom</li> <li>• Anxiety related to social/education development</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Developmental issues</li> <li>• Fear of infection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proper parenting / childcare</li> <li>• Online classes, online study material</li> <li>• Clear, direct, open and detailed information about disease transmission and precautionary measures</li> <li>• Maintenance of sleep cycle, physical exercise schedule</li> <li>• Educate about proper hygiene practice</li> </ul>

# Psychosocial Impact and Suggested Interventions

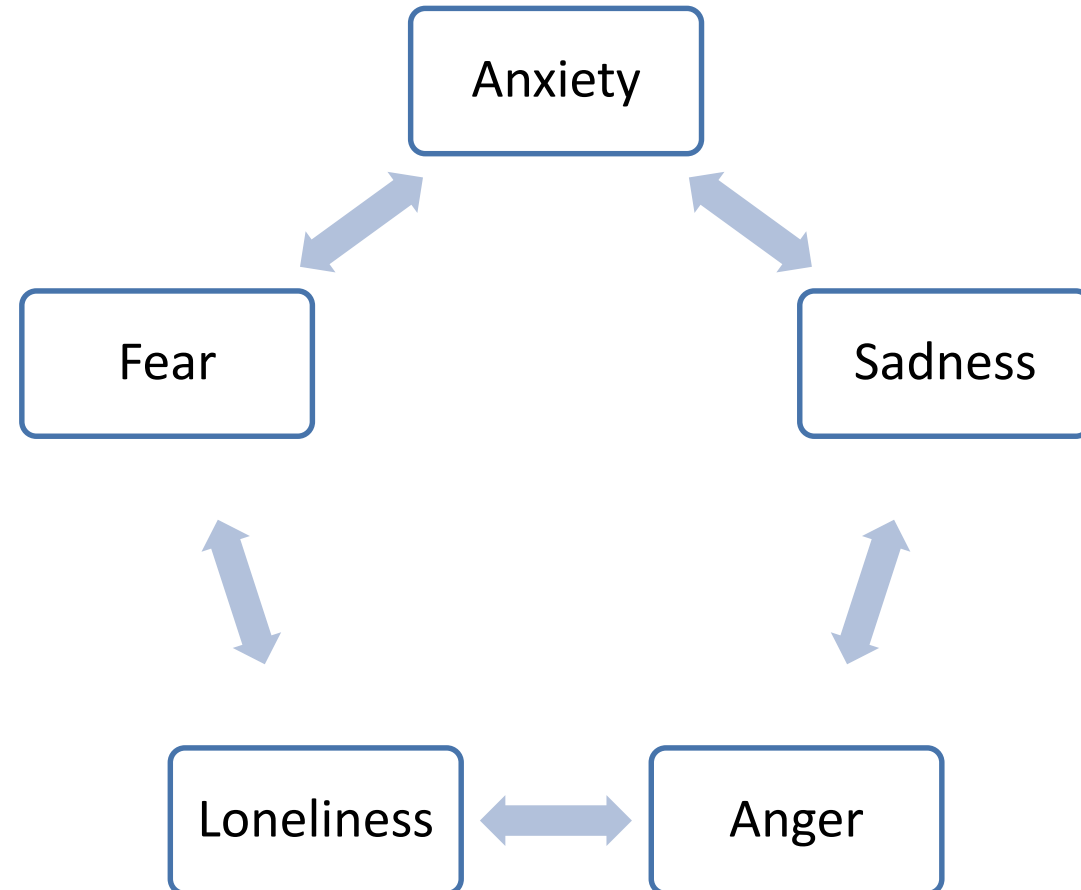
Population	Psychosocial Issues	Intervention
<b>Marginalized community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Stress</li> <li>• Financial insecurity</li> <li>• Stigma of discrimination</li> <li>• Health crime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of basic human rights</li> <li>• Providing proper accommodation</li> <li>• Adequate food and waters supply from government and NGO</li> <li>• Affordable health care delivery</li> <li>• Education about social distancing, hygiene</li> <li>• Deploy mental health social worker to address specific need and referral to psychiatrists, if needed</li> </ul>
<b>Psychiatric patients</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hampered routine psychiatric follow-up</li> <li>• Addiction</li> <li>• Violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and wellness coaching</li> <li>• Counseling via telephone, online chat</li> <li>• Online based psycho-reduction therapies</li> <li>• Proper supply of prescribed medications</li> </ul>

Dubey S, Biswas P, Ghosh R, Chatterjee S, Dubey MJ, Chatterjee S, Lahiri D, Lavie CJ. Psychosocial impact of COVID-19. Diabetes & Metabolic Syndrome: Clinical Research & Reviews. 2020 May 27.



# Emotional States vs. Pathology

- Eating disorders
- Suicide
- PTSD
- Abnormal grief
- Depression
- Substance Use Disorders
- Phobias



Touyz, S., Lacey, H. & Hay, P. Eating disorders in the time of COVID-19. *J Eat Disord* **8**, 19 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40337-020-00295-3>

Harper CA, Satchell LP, Fido D, Latzman RD. Functional Fear Predicts Public Health Compliance in the COVID-19 Pandemic [published online ahead of print, 2020 Apr 27]. *Int J Ment Health Addict*. 2020;1-14. doi:10.1007/s11469-020-00281-5

# Managing Stress / Emotional States

- Times are stressful
- Let's be realistic
- Repeat after me – “It’s okay not to be okay”
- Gratitude



*Special thanks to Dr. María Mejía – RUSM Wellness and Counseling Center*

# Toxic Positivity

- Toxic positivity is the excessive and ineffective overgeneralization of a happy and optimistic state in any situation – the denial, minimization, and invalidation of genuine human emotional experience
- When a person exhibits toxic positivity, they deny any and all negative experiences that make us human and live their life this way

TOXIC  
POSITIVITY

HOPE &  
VALIDATION

WWW.GIRLLOVESGLOSS.COM

YOU JUST HAVE TO BE  
POSITIVE!

I'M SURE IT FEELS HARD  
TO BE POSITIVE IN A  
SITUATION LIKE THIS

STOP BEING SO  
NEGATIVE!

IT'S NORMAL TO FEEL  
NEGATIVE IN THIS  
SITUATION

NEVER GIVE UP!

IT'S OK TO GIVE UP  
SOMETIMES. WOULD  
THE OUTCOME BE IDEAL  
IF YOU DID?

YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR  
THE GOOD

IT'S PROBABLY HARD TO  
SEE ANY GOOD IN THIS  
RIGHT NOW. HOW CAN  
WE MAKE SENSE OF IT?

I'M SURE IT'S NOT AS  
BAD AS IT SEEMS

THIS IS HARD, BUT I  
BELIEVE IN YOU TO GET  
THROUGH IT

THERE ARE WORSE  
THINGS OUT THERE IN  
THE WORLD

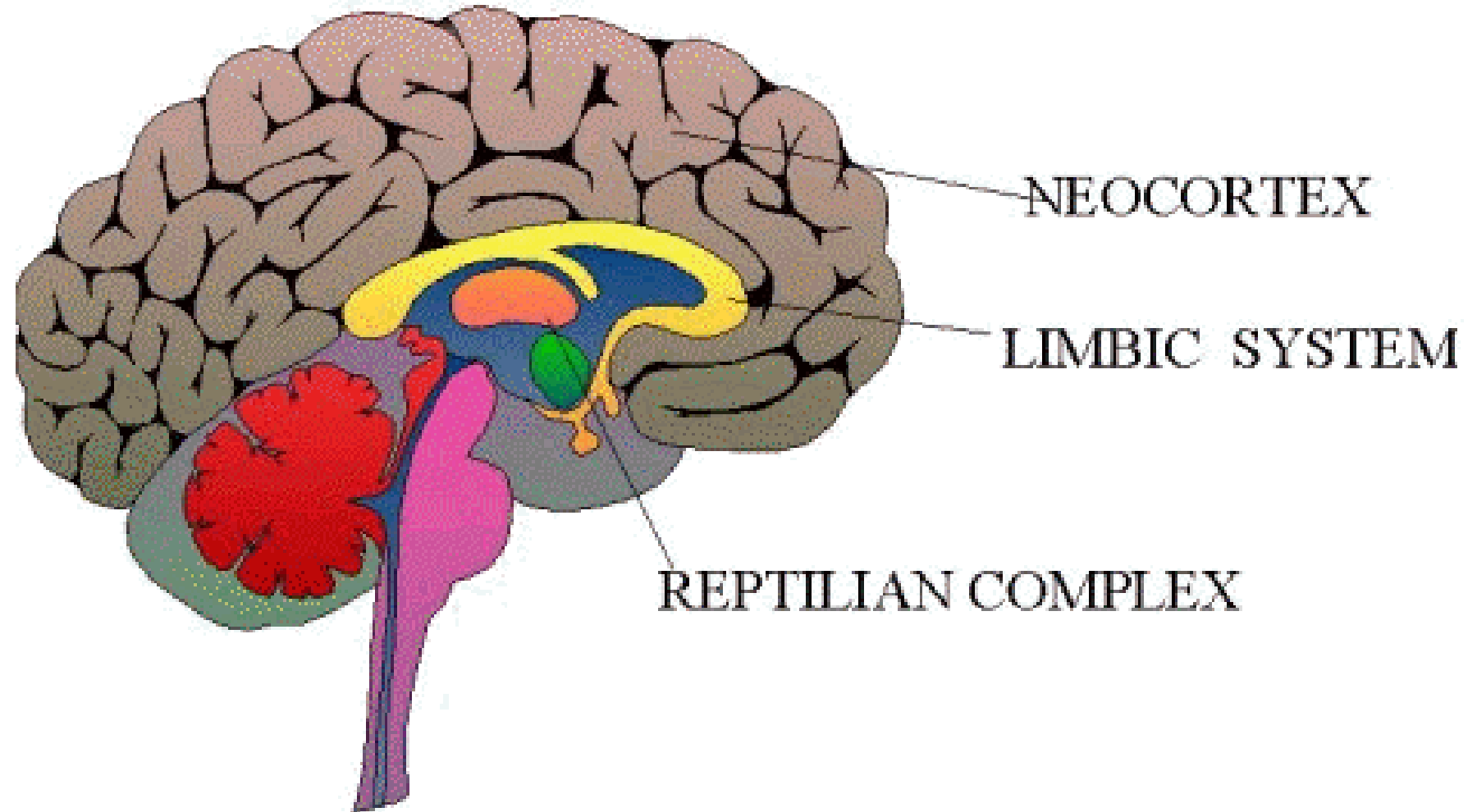
THIS IS REALLY TOUGH  
AND I AM HERE FOR  
YOU.

IT WILL ALL BE OK

I UNDERSTAND WHY IT  
DOESN'T FEEL OK RIGHT  
NOW, AND I AM HERE  
FOR YOU



# Biology



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HU4\\_ufWgP9Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HU4_ufWgP9Y)

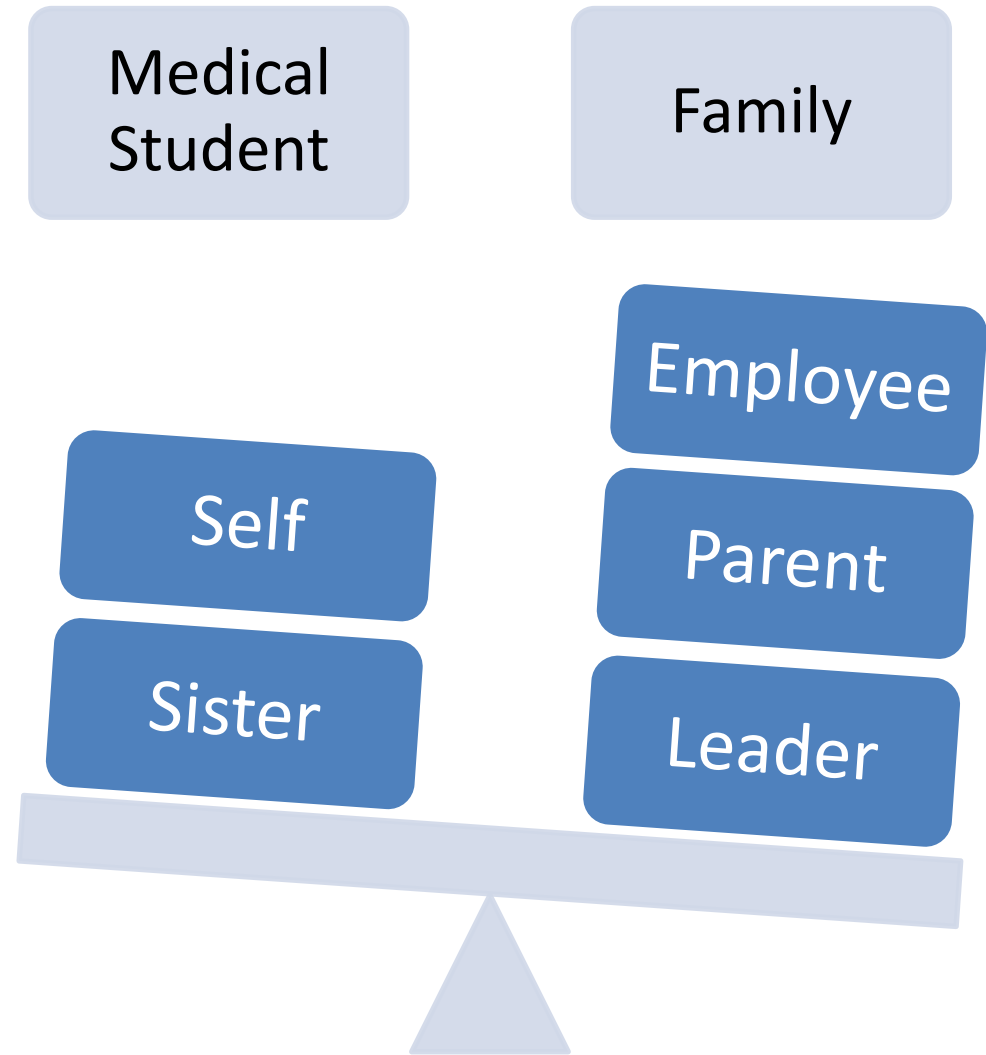
Elemental Alchemy - Airtable

# Signs/Symptoms



# Boundaries

- Managing different roles
- Set priorities
  - Prioritize your well-being daily!
- Learn to say NO
- Recognize signs/symptoms
  - Stop
  - Body scan
  - Breathe
  - Say NO to the non-essential



# Prescription: Find Your Joy

- Sleep
- Movement
- Rest
- Connection
- Meditate
  - Concentrative
  - Awareness
  - Expressive

*Special thanks to Dr. María  
Mejía – RU.SM Wellness and  
Counseling Center*





# RUSM Mind Body Medicine (MBM) Initiative

## *Faculty and Colleagues*

*“Evidence-based skills of  
self-awareness, self-care,  
and self-expression”*

### **The Center for Mind Body Medicine**

- March online webinar - invited all colleagues and students
- Dr. Helgoe and Dr. Gee have completed three (3) workshops for colleagues

### **Online MBM Skills Groups**

- 18 Colleagues – currently enrolled and/or attending

### **Professional Training Program**

- Fundamentals of mind-body medicine
- To date - Seven faculty/colleagues have completed
- 13 faculty are enrolled to attend online Minneapolis, scheduled from July 17-21, 2020

### **Advance Training Program**

- To date - Two faculty have completed and are completing requirements for certification

# RUSM Mind Body Medicine (MBM) Initiative

## *Medical and Clinical Science Students*

- Dr. Helgoe completed MBM Skills Group with 8 students
- Student Ambassadors - Leading peer support groups
- Comprehensive Research Initiative Pending

### **Medical Science Students**

### **Clinical Science Students**

- Online MBM Skills Group
- Completed 7/8 Mind Body Skills Groups



[MS Student Ambassadors](#)