



Caring for Caregivers: Checking In and Creating Community

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Caregiver Definition

- a person who provides direct care (as for children, elderly people, or the chronically ill) (Merriam-Webster)
- Unpaid Family Caregivers (Family Caregivers)
- Paid Caregivers (AFC)
- Parents



Caregiver Challenges

- Balancing work and caregiving
- Financial struggles
- Physical Health challenges
- Mental health challenges
- Isolation
- Lack of community and support

Balancing Work and Caregiving

- Closures of schools and day programs
- Remote work and distance learning
- Lack of respite care due to social distancing
- 50% of working caregivers reported that they had no access to paid family leave (AARP & National Alliance for Caregiving, (2020) Caregiving in the U.S.)
- 32% of women ages 25-44 identified lack of childcare as the reason for unemployment during the pandemic (New York Times survey)



Financial Struggles

- Nearly half of caregivers surveyed said that they experienced financial strains—anything from paying bills late, not paying mortgage, giving up savings, to taking out debt. (AARP & National Alliance for Caregiving, (2020).Caregiving in the U.S.)
- 48% of Black mothers said the pandemic had had a major impact on their ability to pay for necessities like housing utilities and food. (New York Times Survey)





Physical Health Challenges

- 23% of Americans say caregiving has made their health worse (AARP & National Alliance for Caregiving, (2020) Caregiving in the U.S.)
- As measured by the BCBS Health Index, in 2018, caregivers had an average Health Index of 89.6. This score is 2.2 points lower than the benchmark population, which translates to a 26% greater impact of physical and behavioral health conditions that could lower their overall health. (BlueCross BlueShield, (2020) The impact of caregiving on mental and physical health.)

Mental Health Challenges

- 69% of mothers and 51% of fathers surveyed said that they experienced adverse health effects due to worry and stress during the pandemic (New York Times Survey)
- Mental Health America cites that “the emotional burden of caregiving is significant across racial/ethnic groups”:
 - White: 56% report feelings of isolation or loneliness; 32% report feelings of anxiety;
 - Hispanic: 52% report feelings of isolation or loneliness; 34% report feelings of anxiety;
 - Black: 43% report feelings of isolation or loneliness; 23% report feelings of anxiety.”

(BlueCross BlueShield, (2020). The impact of caregiving on mental and physical health.)





Isolation

- Physical Distancing
- In order to protect those they care for from COVID-19, caregivers remained extremely isolated and in many cases sacrificed their own wellbeing.
- One out of five caregivers said that they felt isolated. This number is expected to have increased as the pandemic continued. (AARP & National Alliance for Caregiving, (2020). Caregiving in the U.S.)
- Isolation can lead to physical and mental health challenges
- Loneliness and social isolation have been linked to an increase in heart disease and stroke. The risk was similar to that of light smoking or obesity, according to the researchers. (Valtorta, N. K., Kanaan, M., Gilbody, S., Ronzi, S., & Hanratty, B. (2016).



Checking In and Creating Community

A woman with short blonde hair, wearing a black and white striped long-sleeved shirt and light-colored pants, is sitting in a meditative lotus position on a dark grey sofa. She has her eyes closed and a calm expression. Behind her is a large white bookshelf filled with many books. To the left, a portion of a floor lamp with a white shade is visible. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and intellectual.

Checking In With Ourselves

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

— Viktor E. Frankl, a neurologist, psychologist and Holocaust survivor

Journal

- What is one word to describe how you are feeling right now?
- How did it feel to take a few minutes to check in with yourself?



Share

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A person is shown from the waist down, sitting in a lotus position on a light-colored surface. They are wearing a white tank top and light blue pants. Their hands are held in front of them in a mudra, with the index and thumb fingers touching. The background is softly blurred, showing warm, out-of-focus lights, possibly from a Christmas tree or festive decorations.

Why is it important to check in with ourselves?

- To know how we are *actually* feeling so we can make the best choices for ourselves from moment to moment
- To learn how to be with our emotions without judgement
- To learn how to hold more than one emotion at once
- To learn to pay attention to the signs and messages from our body, mind, breath, and heart
- Connecting to self can help combat feelings of isolation and loneliness

Share

What are some ways you could integrate this practice into your daily life?



Checking In On Each Other

“Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity.”

— Brené Brown



Share

What is one word to describe how you are feeling right now?





Breakout Rooms

What is something you
are grateful for?





Share

What was that
experience like for
you?



Why is it important to check in on each other?

- To foster human connection
- To remind each other that we are not alone
- To act with empathy and emotional intelligence
- To combat isolation and loneliness



Share

What are some ways you could integrate this practice into your daily life?



Creating Community

“What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured.”

— Kurt Vonnegut





Journal

- What does community mean to you?
- How can you create more community in your life or the lives of the caregivers you support?



Share

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- How can you create more community in your life or the lives of the caregivers you support?





Caring for Caregivers Community

Checking In With Yourself

Body - Scan your body from head to toe. Notice the sensations in your body without judgment.

Mind - Bring your awareness to your mind. Notice the quality of your thoughts. Know that in this moment you do not need to react or respond to your thoughts, just observe.

Breath - Bring your attention to your heart. Notice how your breath feels in your body. If your mind wanders, come back to your inhale and exhale.

More Resources for Caregivers and Parents



COVID-19

Parenting and Caregiving
COVID-19 requires fresh approaches to ...
<https://www.apa.org>

Add comment

Caregiving in the US 2020 Report

2015 2020 2015 2020
NEARLY ONE IN FIVE (19%) ARE PROVIDING
UNPAID CARE TO AN ADULT WITH HEALTH OR FUNCTIONAL NEEDS.**

Resources for Caregivers and Parents



COVID-19 - Caregiving and Parenting
Being a caregiver or a parent is stressful...
mental health america

Add comment

BCBS Report

CONDITION PREVALENCE PER 100	LOW INCOME COMMUNITY			MIDDLE INCOME COMMUNITY		
	2015	2016	% CHG	2015	2016	% CHG
Adjustment Disorder	4.8	3.4	+42%	5.9	4.3	+35%
Anxiety	16.5	11.1	+48%	18.2	13.5	+35%
Major Depression	6.4	4.3	+48%	7.3	5.4	+35%
Tobacco Use Disorder	12.7	8.4	+48%	11.2	7.8	+44%
Obesity	29.9	19.8	+51%	26.4	18.8	+41%
Hypertension	45.7	27.0	+49%	41.3	25.1	+49%

The Impact of Caregiving on Mental an...
This report highlights the critical need f...
bcbs

Add comment

NYT Series



Mental Health America: Caregiving in BIPOC Communities



Caregiving in BIPOC Communities
Family caregivers exist across all demo...
mental health america

Add comment

Caring for Caregivers Community Padlet



Checking In With Ourselves

- Body
- Mind
- Breath
- Heart



Thank you!