

# COVID-19 Information Collaboration

*Building Strength, Courage, and Resilience, through the Pandemic*

Local Support Line: (817)-579-4483 | Email: TRT@pecanvalley.org | Texas COVID-19 24/7 Support Line: (833)-986-1919



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## Greetings from the CCP!!

*Written by Madalyn Cano, MSSW, LMSW*

We are really pleased to be able to share information about this terrific program. The **Texans Recovering Together Crisis Counseling Program** (TRT CCP) is funded through a grant to support the mental health and stress management needs of individuals in our communities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our services are **FREE and CONFIDENTIAL**. We will not share any personal identifying information and there is no eligibility criteria. This program is different than what most people might be used to, as there is no need for a diagnosis, and we hope that helps members of our communities move past any perceived stigma in reaching out for brief, solution-focused support during these tough times. The TRT CCP through Pecan Valley Centers has a **multi-disciplinary team of trained counselors** who are ready to provide individual and group counseling and resource referrals for any number of needs. We understand that no matter who you are, what your situation is, we are here to help you – even if it’s just a regular phone call to check in, or if it is assisting you through the action plan for immediate needs. In some cases, we are meeting with students in schools to help with anxiety and depression; in other cases we are visiting elderly in their homes, or meeting with first responders and business leaders on self-care strategies for their workforce. I hope you find this information helpful. Don’t hesitate to reach out with any questions: call **817-579-4483** or email **trt@pecanvalley.org**.

~ Blessings, Madalyn Cano, Program Manager

## Maintaining Healthy Relationships during COVID-19

Written by Jamie Pytlik, BSW



Since the initial onset of COVID-19, social distancing mandates have impacted teenagers in unique ways. Isolation from peers has increased teenagers' technology usage to stay connected, which has led to increases in reports of digital dating abuse. Additionally, compounded stress created by the pandemic can cause teenagers to act out in self-destructive ways, often leading to conflict in relationships. February is Teen

Dating Violence Awareness Month. The TRT CCP wants to spread awareness of how compounded stress from the pandemic, coupled with increased technology usage, can lead to greater opportunities for teen dating abuse. If your teen is struggling to manage compounded stress, the CCP can provide support to help address these concerns. Healthy coping skills, such as engaging in positive activities, can help relieve COVID-19 related stress. If conflict does occur, it is important to use healthy communication skills to resolve conflict, such as "I" statements. If you need additional assistance in developing healthy habits to maintain healthy relationships during COVID-19, the TRT CCP is here to support you.

Source: Nationwide Children's Hospital, (2021) [1] & National Child Traumatic Stress Network, (2010) [2]

## Senior Support: Including Seniors in Valentine's Day Festivities

Written by Latisha Melton, MSW

As far back as the year 496, people have sent Valentine's gifts of sentiment such as cards, candy, flowers, stuffed animals, and much more to show their endearment. This year the traditions remain the same as COVID-19 has not stopped our resiliency through celebrating holidays. However, there are populations that are remaining isolated in fear of contracting the virus, such as our senior populations. This article is just a friendly reminder that while you are shopping for your loved ones, take the time to grab an extra card, candy, or teddy bear for your senior and mail or deliver it to their house. Even if it is after February 14th, go grab all the Valentine's on sale at the stores and get more bang for your buck! You could even call your local nursing home to

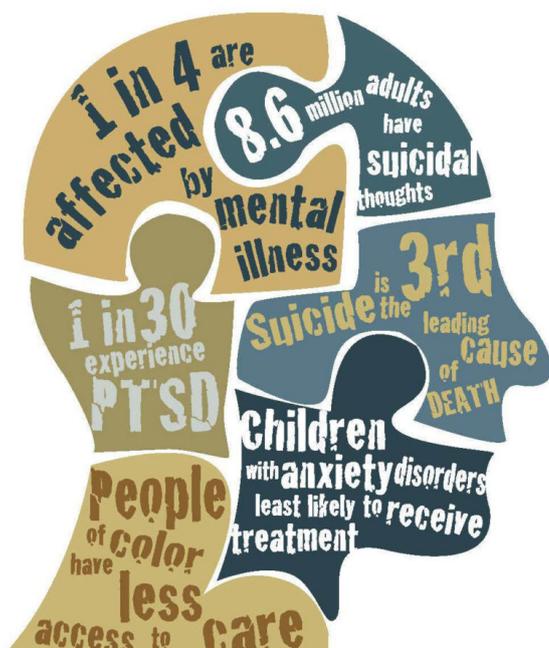


see if they had a senior in mind that may enjoy and little token of affection. What a wonderful blessing that would be during such a lonely time. Hope you all have a wonderful Valentines Day!

Source: British Broadcasting Corporation (2020) [3].

## Children and Youth: Teenagers' Mental Health During COVID-19 Isolation

Written by Hailey Durham, BSW



Being a teenager is challenging no matter what. The pandemic and having to navigate all the challenges that come along with COVID-19 makes it even harder. For teenagers facing life changes due to the outbreak who are feeling anxious, isolated and disappointed, know this: you are not alone. However, there are many effective things we can do to keep ourselves and others safe and to feel in better control of our circumstances:

1. Recognize that your anxiety is completely normal.
2. Create distractions.
3. Find new ways to connect with your friends.
4. Focus on you.
5. Feel your feelings.
6. Be kind to yourself and others.

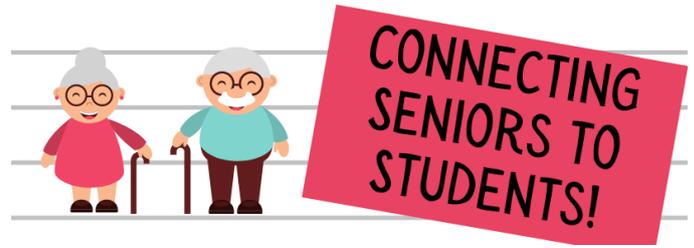
Its also important to remember that not everyone processes emotions or events the same. Trying multiple ideas and strategies can be the best way to get to know what works more effectively for you and helps you cope with the challenges of COVID-19.

Source: UNICEF (2020) [4].

## Teacher-to-Teacher: Connecting Seniors to Students

*Written by Tashika Smith, LBSW, MA*

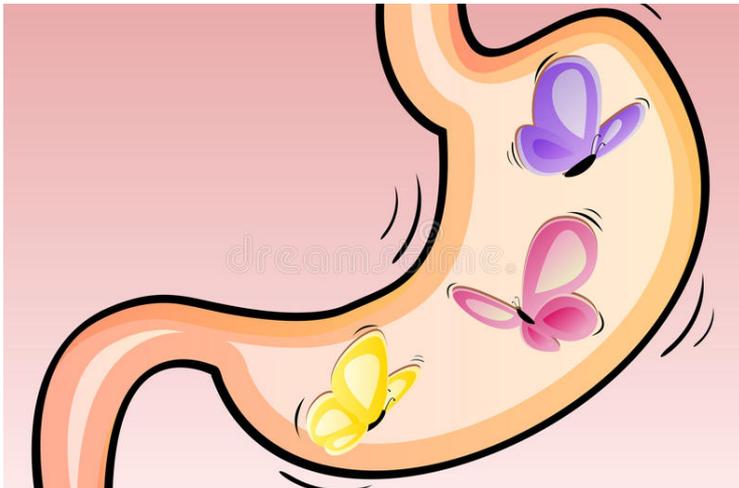
The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on a host of populations. One way it has affected the senior citizen population is with the visitation restrictions in nursing homes and other long-term care communities. Family members, loved ones and designated caregivers have been unable to have face-to-face visits with facility residents as seniors are believed to be at high risk for catching the coronavirus due to pre-existing conditions. These visitation restrictions have contributed to an increase in feelings of loneliness, isolation, and abandonment. To combat some of the loneliness faced by seniors, the CCP team is currently working on a project called Connecting Seniors to Students. The premise is that seniors will have virtual visits with a school-aged student. During these virtual visits, the seniors and students may have the opportunity to read to one another,



or the seniors could even share stories of historical events that occurred during their earlier years, thus making history come alive for the student. In honor of Valentine's Day, the CCP also partnered with local schools to create and deliver valentines to seniors in long-term care facilities. In total, students at 10 schools created 742 valentines, which were delivered to 15 senior care facilities. If you are interested in getting involved in this effort, please contact the TRT CCP.

## Healthy Connections: Go With Your Gut!

*Written by Andrea Carmack, M.Ed.*



"Have you ever had a "gut-wrenching" experience? Do certain situations make you "feel nauseous"? Have you ever felt "butterflies" in your stomach? The gastrointestinal

tract is sensitive to emotion. Anger, anxiety, sadness, elation — all of these feelings (and others) can trigger symptoms in the gut" (Harvard Medical School, 2020, para 1). Our thoughts have a direct effect on our gut health. There are approximately 100 billion neurons in the human brain. Our gut contains 500 million neurons, which are connected to our brain through the nerves in our nervous system. Next time you are feeling nervous or anxious and having stomach issues, stop and think about what you're thinking. Examine your thoughts and ask yourself, "Is this true? Do I enjoy this feeling? Can I do anything regarding what I am feeling?" If you can change something, change it; if you cannot and you do not enjoy the feeling, or if it's not working for you, take a moment from Frozen~ let it go, let it go! Go with your gut and it will go the long haul with you!

Source: Harvard Medical School (2020) [5]

## Resource Connection: How Does the CCP Assist in a Disaster?

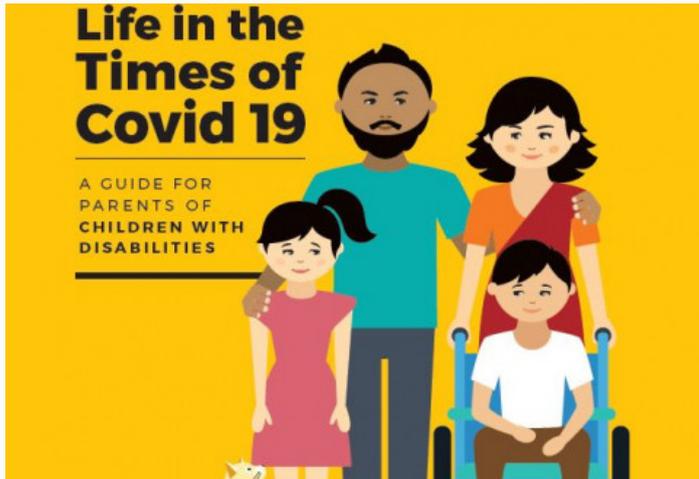
*Written by Gracie Chafer, LBSW*

As crisis counselors, we are trained over a range of information on helping people through a disaster. Clients in an emergency usually enter a state of psychological distress and retreat to handle the after effect of an emergency or crisis. They may be instantly unable to plan for their immediate needs. We, as crisis counselors, may provide transient methods of advocacy to help clients meet their needs. This may entail translating clients' wants to service providers or assisting clients in applying for social services. This can also include immediate need referrals to community resources for food, clothing, furniture, rental assistance, and medical and mental health support resources, or connecting individuals to support networks, including family members, friends, neighbors, and community helping resources.

**CRISIS  
COUNSELING  
DURING  
COVID-19**

# Special Populations: Tips for Parents of Children with Special Needs during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Written by Cindi Lopez, M.Ed., LPC



Parents of children with special needs are reporting an increase in temper tantrums and other disruptions—hitting, whining, and yelling due to stress of staying home and learning remotely. Tanjala Gipson, MD,

FANN, Director of the Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Clinic at the Center for Developmental Disabilities says, “the number one problem I see is that parents have expectations that don’t meet the individual’s disability,” she says. Overall, Dr. Gipson says, the stress of the pandemic has been hard on everyone. “You might have to make some adjustments right now, but this is temporary. Never give up hope.” Dr. Gipson also encourages parents to “take it easy on themselves” and suggests, along with other professionals, these strategies:

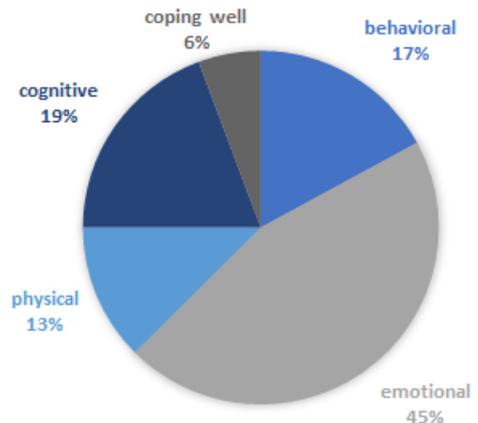
1. Make safety a priority
2. Use few words
3. Focus on yourself first-make sure you are in an emotionally regulated state
4. Be forgiving
5. Access resources
6. Find support
7. Use assistive technology

Source: Brain & Life (2020) [6]

## Impact of the CCP

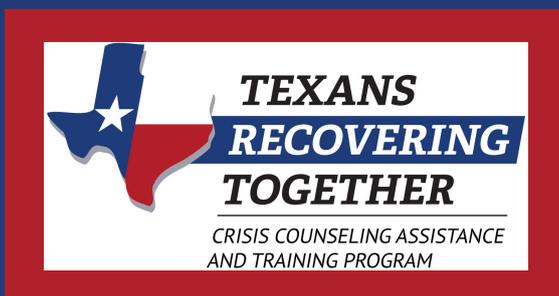
Written by Jamie Pytlik, BSW

In the seven months since the TRT CCP was established at Pecan Valley Centers, the CCP has made quite the impact on our communities. During the week of January 24, the CCP served 40 individuals through individual crisis counseling and facilitated two group counseling events and three public education events. Of the participants in these encounters, 45% were experiencing emotional reactions, such as sadness and anxiety. Nineteen percent were experiencing cognitive reactions, such as difficulty concentrating and making decisions. Seventeen percent were experiencing behavioral reactions, such as isolation and withdrawal, and 13% were experiencing physical reactions, such as fatigue and exhaustion. Six percent of the participants were coping well. In these encounters, crisis counselors provided assistance with problem solving, doing positive things, managing physical and emotional reactions, and reducing negative thoughts to the majority of



participants. If you or someone you know is experiencing disaster reactions or stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the TRT CCP is a free and confidential resource designed to mitigate long-term mental health concerns. Please reach out today for information on how we can support you.

# Texans Recovering Together Crisis Counseling Program is here to support you through COVID-19!



## FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL

- Crisis Counseling
- Resource Referrals
- Skill Building
- Grief and Loss
- Disaster Education and Awareness

Provided locally by Pecan Valley Centers for Behavioral and Developmental Healthcare  
Serving Erath, Hood, Johnson, Palo Pinto, Parker, and Somervell Counties

**Need support? Scan our QR Code and fill out the online form to be connected with a trained crisis counselor!**

**Contact Information:**

Local Referral Line: (817)-579-4483  
Email: TRT@pecanvalley.org  
Texas COVID-19 24/7 Support Line: (833)-986-1919  
Pecan Valley 24-Hour Crisis Hotline: (800)-772-5987



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FOR BEHAVIORAL & DEVELOPMENTAL HEALTHCARE



**TEXANS  
RECOVERING  
TOGETHER**  
CRISIS COUNSELING ASSISTANCE  
AND TRAINING PROGRAM

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**February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month**

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**Senior Support: Including Seniors in Valentine's Day Festivities**

[3] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2020) *What is Valentine's Day and how did it start?* Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/16945378>

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**Children and Youth: Teenagers' Mental Health During COVID-19 Isolation**

[4] UNICEF. (2020). *How teenagers can protect their mental health during COVID-19*. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teenagers-can-protect-their-mental-health-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

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**Teacher to Teacher: Connecting Seniors to Students**

Image: Developed by the CCP team

**Healthy Connections: Go With Your Gut!**

[5] Harvard Medical School. (2020). *The gut-brain connection*. Retrieved from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/the-gut-brain-connection>

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**Resource Referrals: How Does the CCP Assist in a Disaster?**

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**Special Populations:**

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**Impact of the CCP**

Data collected from the CCP.

Image: Chart developed from CCP data.