CRATER COMMUNITY HOSPICE
Celebrating Life Every Day

COVID-19 Newsletter for Families

Questions? Call Us!

804-526-4300

Helpful tips for family caregivers

Living day-to-day in the context of COVID

Keep calm and stay in balance

It's natural to feel a wide range of emotions, including fear, anxiety, confusion, or loneliness. It is also a time to take extra care to address your feelings. The pandemic is like an emotional marathon. We need to pace ourselves.

Get the facts. Our emotional responses come from the part of our brain that specializes in survival and gives us extra energy to fight or flee. Very useful! But we need the thinking part of our brain to take charge and analyze the facts for a balanced, healthy perspective. Use reliable sources of information, such as the Centers for Disease Control (coronavirus.gov) and your local health department (http://bit.ly/2WtJm2L).

Give yourself a sensible media diet. Limit the amount of time you consume news each day. Avoid sensational sources that concentrate on what's going wrong. Feed yourself information that is empowering (what you can do). Verify anything you hear on social media, even from friends.

Focus on what you can do. We are most afraid when things feel out of control. While a global pandemic may feel overwhelming, we do have tremendous power to limit this virus with simple, individual actions, such as handwashing, wearing masks, and social distancing.

Stay safely connected with friends and family. It's good to share your feelings. AND make sure to talk about topics besides Covid-19. If you are "sheltering at home," use the phone, texting, email, and social media to stay connected. If you have access to FaceTime, Zoom, Skype, or Google Hangouts, use them! Video visiting is a good alternative to in-person interaction.

Take care of your body. Eat wisely and pay attention to getting good, sound sleep. Avoid caffeine, which is anxiety producing. Take time to exercise, and spend time outdoors. Even "shelter-in-place" communities encourage walking outside. Just wear masks and maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet from others. Keep up with your medications, especially those for depression and anxiety. Avoid increased use of alcohol and recreational drugs.

Replenish your spirit. Prolonged stress has been shown to compromise the immune system. What do you usually do to manage stress and lift up your spirits? Find time to invest in your mental health—and your resistance to viruses—by specifically scheduling activities that help you feel calm and grounded.

Get help. If you find you are overwhelmed by your feelings and unable to function very well for 2–3 days, seek professional help. If you don't know who to turn to, contact the Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517).

"It's hard to deal with the isolation. But I'm learning that there are things I can do to keep a sense of normalcy in my life."

804-526-4300, OR TOLL-FREE IN VIRGINIA AT 800-275-4518

Crater Community Hospice supports older adults and their families in Southside Virginia.

Give us a call at 804-526-4300, or toll-free in Virginia at 800-275-4518 to find out how we can support you.

Re-opening: What's safe?

Life is a series of trade-offs. Calculated risks. During this pandemic, that trade-off seems to translate into health and safety vs. quality of life—what makes life worth living. Typically, adult children are worried about their aging parents' health and safety. Older adults are more focused on their quality of life.

As we open up, deciding what to do becomes a matter of reducing the risks. No one can guarantee safety. But these considerations might help as you assess what activities seem worth the possible exposure.

How active the virus is locally. Find the COVID website of your local health department at http://bit.ly/2WtJm2L.

Evaluate activities by

- **time.** Reduce the amount of *time* spent with others
- **space.** Seek situations where a lot of personal *space* can be maintained (6 feet apart, minimum)
- **people.** The fewer the number of *people,* the better
- **place.** *Outdoors* (open air) is much better than indoors (not much ventilation)

Reduce risks by moving an activity outdoors. Fewer people, and for a shorter duration, also helps. (Fifteen minutes is better than sixty.)

Think in terms of a "risk budget." This is much like a sugar budget for a diet. If a high-risk activity is really important emotionally or spiritually, ask "What can be done to reduce the risk?" Or at worst, consider "blowing the budget" on that one activity rarely. Then keep all other activities very low risk for a while in order to compensate. (A banana split once, and then only sugar in coffee for the next month.)

If your relative has chronic conditions or is otherwise frail, the budget might be stricter. Unless they have dementia and are unable to make decisions for themselves, it's ultimately your loved one's decision how much risk an activity is worth.

Running essential errands

If nothing else, keeping risks low for essential tasks allows more room in the "risk budget" for those activities that may be higher risk but are personally meaningful.

Always follow these guidelines:

- Use online services when available.
- Wear a cloth face covering when running errands.
- Send in only one person from the household.
- Use social distancing. Stay at least 6 feet apart.
- Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol after leaving stores.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds when you get home.

Grocery shopping

- Order online for home delivery or for curbside pickup.
- Plan ahead to limit trips to once a week.
- Look for directional signs in aisles that may help you maintain social distancing.
- Use touchless payment (for example, no cash).

Banking

- Use online mobile apps, ATMs, and drive-thru banking whenever possible.
- Use hand sanitizer immediately after using an ATM or drive-thru.
- Ask about options for phone or virtual meetings if you must speak with a banker.
- Look for staff wearing masks, plexiglass separators, social distancing marks, and other precautions.

Getting gas

- Use sanitizing wipes before touching handles and buttons.
- Use hand sanitizer immediately afterward.

Contact us at 804-526-4300, or toll-free in Virginia at 800-275-4518

CRATER COMMUNITY HOSPICE

Celebrating Life Every Day