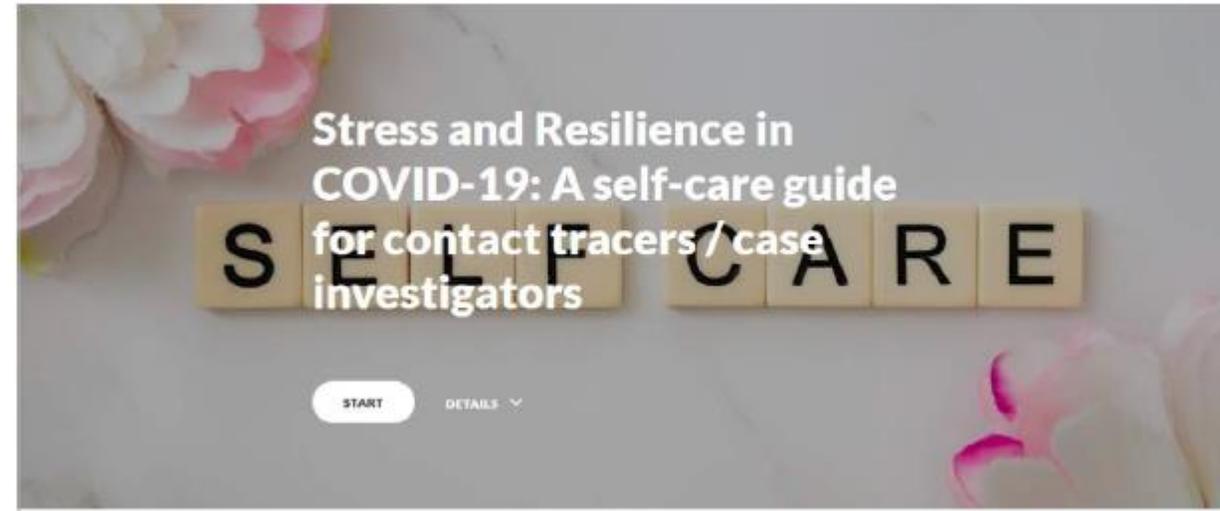




Nathan Bertelsen, MD, MScPH  
Associate Professor of Medicine  
University of Minnesota Medical  
Center

## Stress and Resilience in COVID-19: Facilitators Guide for Listening Sessions + Self-Care Guide

## Listening Sessions with Case Investigators / Contact Tracers: Facilitator's Guide for Supervisors

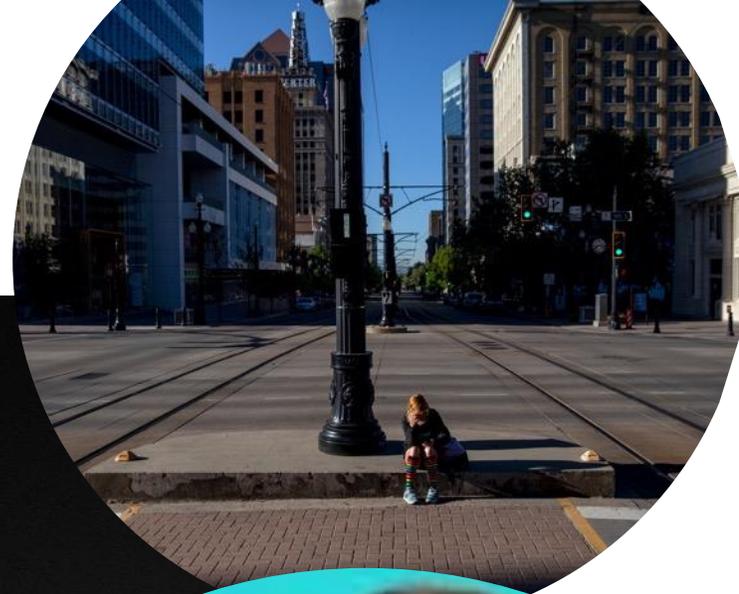


[Link to guide](#)

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

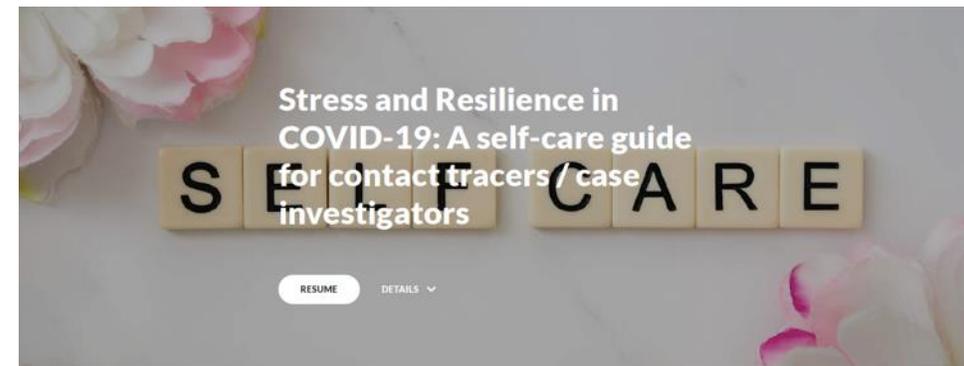
1. Define specific **stressors** and **coping mechanisms** common among refugee health providers during the pandemic.
2. Describe **self-care tips** and **resilience factors** from CDC and other health professionals that are targeted toward this work.
3. Outline how supervisors can conduct **listening sessions** with peers and staff, and identify key tools and **resources** for support.

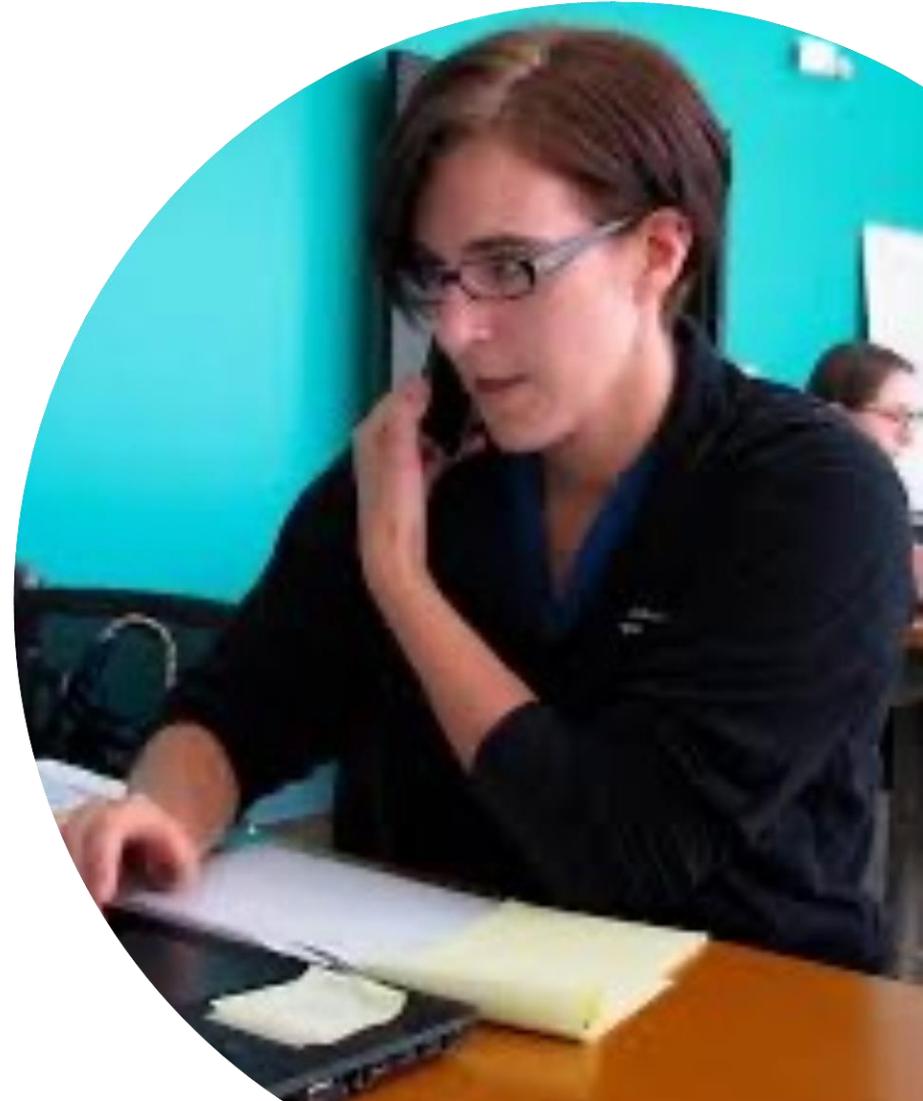
# Listening Sessions with Case Investigators / Contact Tracers: Facilitator's Guide for Supervisors





Why do this?





*Should I be doing this?*

# How do we do this?



- **Scheduled meetings**

- Team huddles
- Mentorship
- Managing discrimination
- Creating space to debrief
- Successful ways to debrief
- Modeling
- Chat groups
- Mindfulness



Dawn



Fatuma



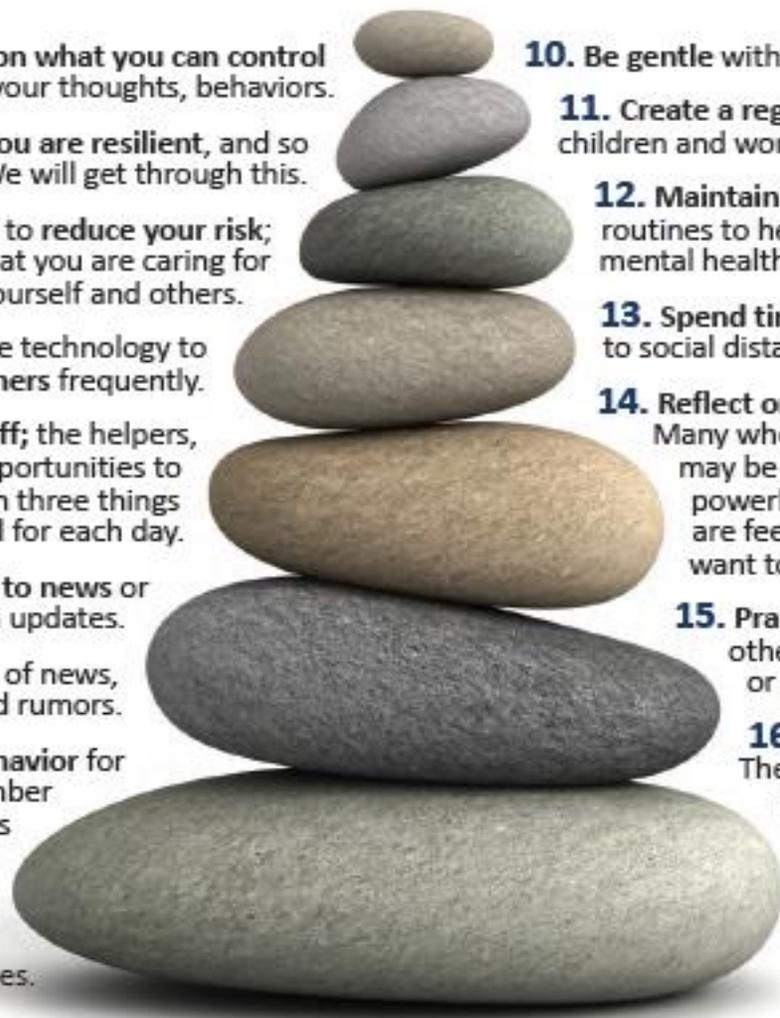
Jenna



# Find your happy place.

TIPS TO REDUCE COVID-19 STRESS

- 1. Focus on what you can control** – including your thoughts, behaviors.
  - 2. Remember that you are resilient**, and so is humankind. We will get through this.
  - 3. Do what you can to reduce your risk**; take comfort that you are caring for yourself and others.
  - 4. Use technology to connect with others** frequently.
  - 5. Look for the good stuff**; the helpers, time with family, and opportunities to pull together. Write down three things you are grateful for each day.
  - 6. Limit exposure to news or social media updates.**
  - 7. Use reputable sources of news**, avoid speculation and rumors.
  - 8. Model peaceful behavior** for those around you. Remember everyone experiences stress in different ways.
- Don't let fear influence your decisions**, such as hoarding supplies.



- 10. Be gentle with yourself and others.**
- 11. Create a regular routine**, especially for children and work from home.
- 12. Maintaining a healthy diet and exercise routines** to help your immune system and mental health.
- 13. Spend time in nature** while adhering to social distancing guidelines.
- 14. Reflect on your reactions.**  
Many who have experienced trauma may be triggered by feelings of powerlessness. Understanding what you are feeling can help you consider what you want to respond to the triggers.
- 15. Practice meditation, yoga, or other mind-body techniques.** Find resources or online videos to help.
- 16. Reach out if you need to.** There are local and national hotlines and warmlines that can help.

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# How do we facilitate?

- Give time to think and process responses.
- Allow silence.
- Reflect back to what was said, without judgment or interpretation.
- Frequently remind this is a safe space.
- Stay positive!
  - Avoid making negative statements and repeat positive comments or tips.
- Monitor carefully for red flags.
- Manage time carefully—natural pace.
- Finish with a mindfulness exercise!



# How do we start?

Opening script: an example:

- Thank you for sharing your time with us today. Working in the COVID-19 response has been very stressful for health care settings and staff. It is important to listen to, understand and respond to the concerns of both patients and health care workers.
- This is a listening session, intended to provide us a safe space to share or debrief about our work, without judgment or interpretation.
- Participation is voluntary and anonymous, and you do not have to participate if you choose not to. There is no wrong or right answer. We just want to listen to you.
- Please do not hesitate to contact us with any concern or question, and please take a moment to look at self-care materials, like this COVID-19 Pocket Guide from MDH.
- Let's begin the session.

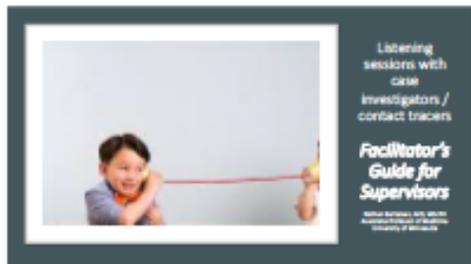


# What do we ask?

- What **stories** illustrate your experiences with this work?
- How does this make you **feel**?
- What has been **stressful or troubling** about your work?
  - Aggressive behavior?
  - Abuse?
  - Witnessing death?
- How have you been **handling or coping** with it?
  - Support?
  - Inspiration?
  - Additional resources?



Can I see an example?



Please see the [online module](#) for an **introductory video** and an **example listening session**. To illustrate, a listening session was held and recorded with six case investigators / contact tracers. The session lasted one hour. Here, it has been edited to under 25 minutes, and divided into **six short video segments**, for your convenience:

1. [Introduction to session](#)
2. [Stories?](#)
3. [Stressors?](#)
4. [Coping mechanisms?](#)
5. [Resources?](#)
6. [Closing](#)



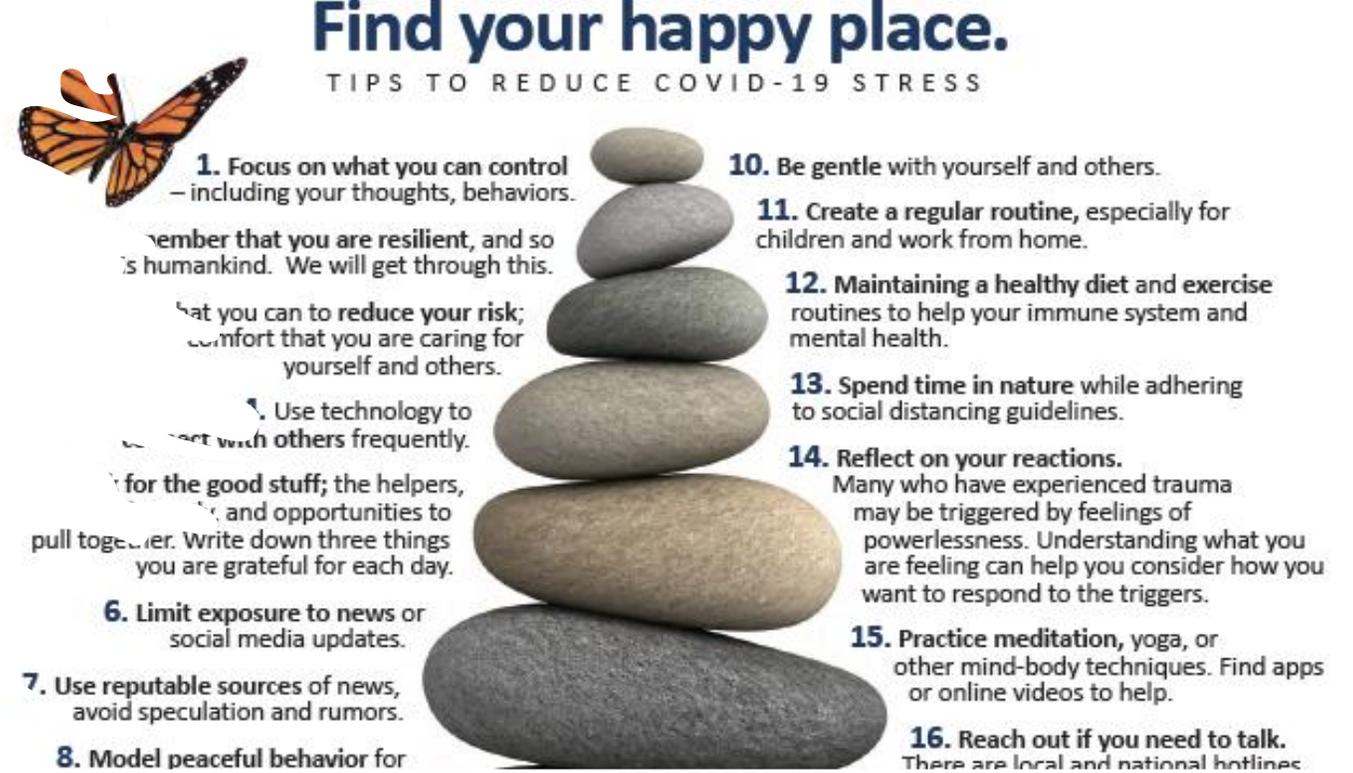
Thank you for listening, and good luck!





# Self Care Guide for Case Investigators / Contact Tracers

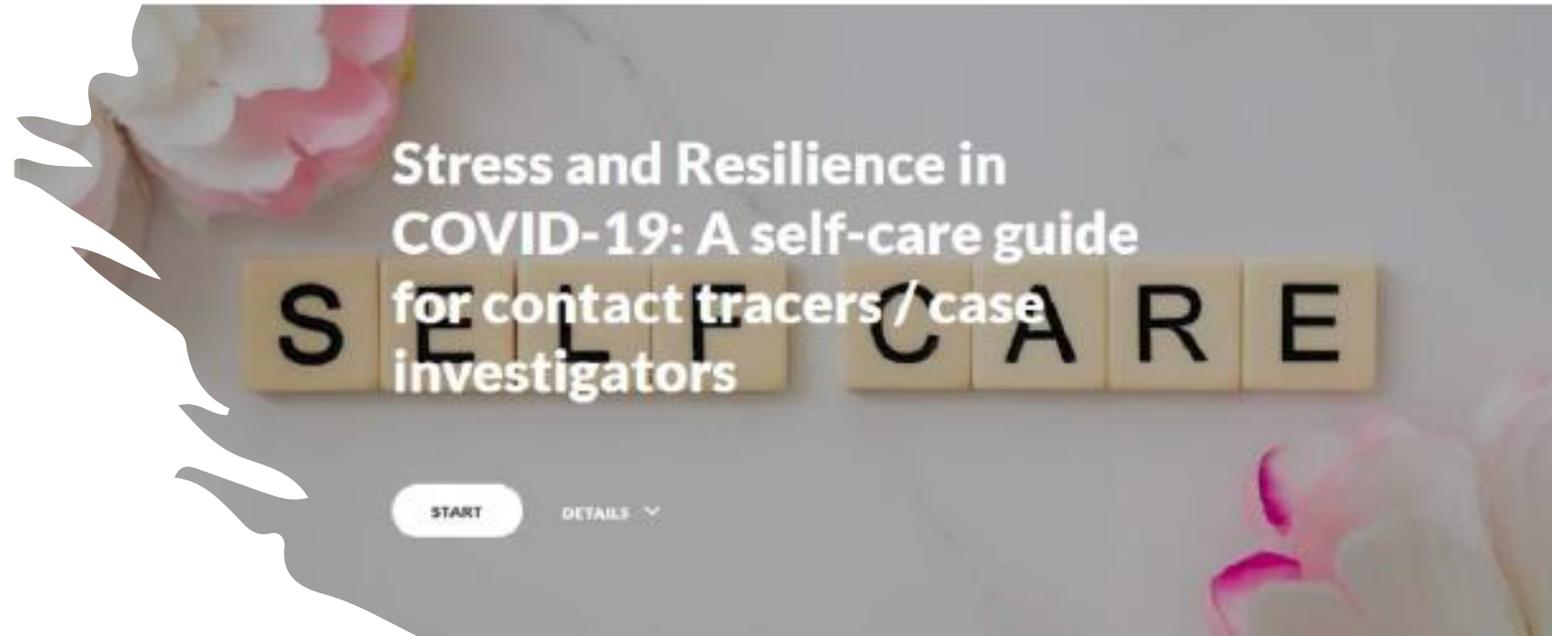
- Roles and responsibilities
- Key terms
- Stressors
- Coping mechanisms
- Resources



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- 14. Reflect on your reactions.** Many who have experienced trauma may be triggered by feelings of powerlessness. Understanding what you are feeling can help you consider how you want to respond to the triggers.
- 15. Practice meditation, yoga, or other mind-body techniques.** Find apps or online videos to help.
- 16. Reach out if you need to talk.** There are local and national hotlines.



## Stress and Resilience in COVID-19: A self-care guide

### for contact tracers / case investigators

**SELF CARE**

START DETAILS

# Interviews with Dawn, Fatuma, & Jenna

- **Stories** that illustrate the work
- **Stressors** they experienced
- **Coping mechanisms** they found



Dawn



Fatuma



Jenna

# Building community



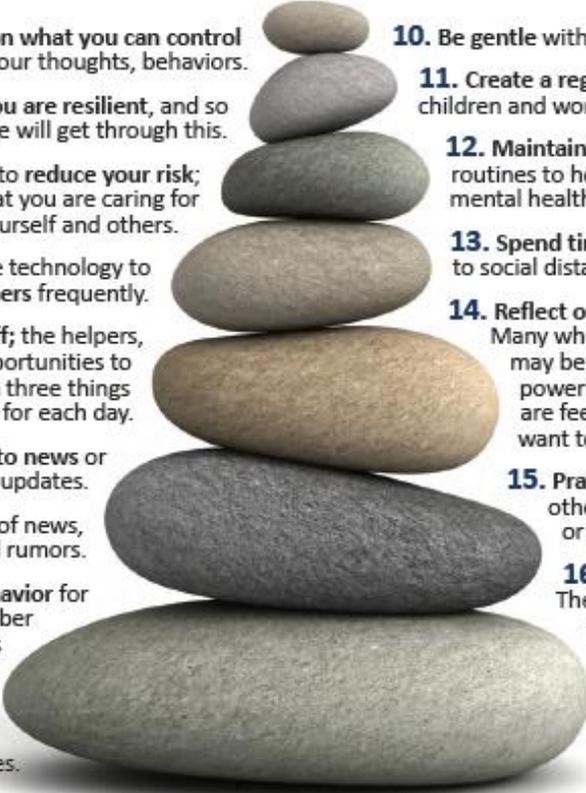
# Self-Care Guide: Tips for Taking Care of Yourself

- Key terms: Stress, secondary stress, burnout, resilience, mindfulness
- Stress and Performance
- CDC Tips for Taking Care of Yourself in the Pandemic
- Dr Hawthorne Smith on Coping with Stress
- 3-minute Mindfulness Exercise
- Links and resources



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OF HEALTH

health.mn.gov | 03,

# Take home points

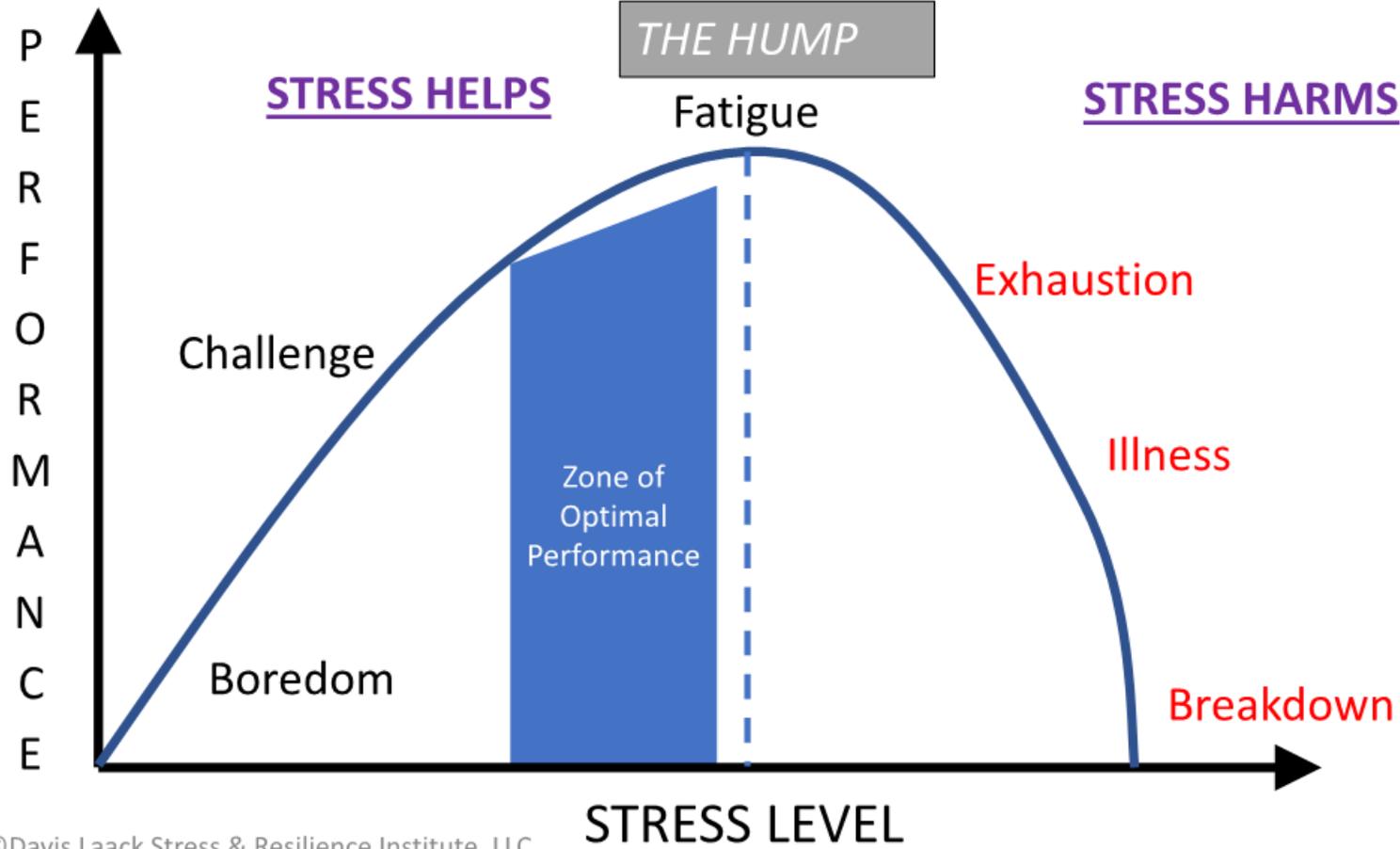
- Case investigators / contact tracers collect information and provide education/awareness
- Stressors
  - Doubt, trust, uncertainty, isolation, guilt
- Coping mechanisms
  - Debriefing with others, taking breaks, dedicated space at work to share
  - Unplug, recharge
- Advice
  - Every day is a new day
  - Exercise, meditate, live healthy
  - We need to connect with one another—“We all get it.”

# Key terms

- **Stress** is the body's reaction to changes, threats, or triggers.
  - Mobilize action, crisis mode
- **Secondary stress / vicarious trauma**—personal reactions to another's stressful experience.
- **Burnout** is emotional, physical or mental exhaustion from stress.
  - Feeling overwhelmed, drained, detached, unable to meet demands
- **Resilience** is overcoming our challenges or difficulties.
  - Recovery, returning to a familiar place, springing back into shape
- **Mindfulness** is awareness of the moment.
  - Intensely aware of what we are sensing or feeling

# Stress-Performance Sweet Spot

(Based on work by Drs. David Posen & Peter Nixon)



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# CDC Emergency Responders: Tips for taking care of yourself

- Signs of burnout *see website*
- Signs of secondary traumatic stress *see website*
- **Find a buddy!**
  - Two responders partner together to support each other and monitor each other's stress, workload and safety
- <https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/responders.asp>

# Coping with Stress (CDC)

- Stress during a pandemic can sometimes cause the following:
- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones, your financial situation or job, or loss of support services.
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns.
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.
- Worsening of mental health conditions.
- Increased use of tobacco, and/or alcohol and other substances.
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

# Coping with Stress (CDC)

- Take care of yourself and your community
- Know what to do
- Know where to go
- Take care of your emotional health
- Take breaks
- Take care of your body
- Make time to unwind
- Connect with others
- Connect with your community

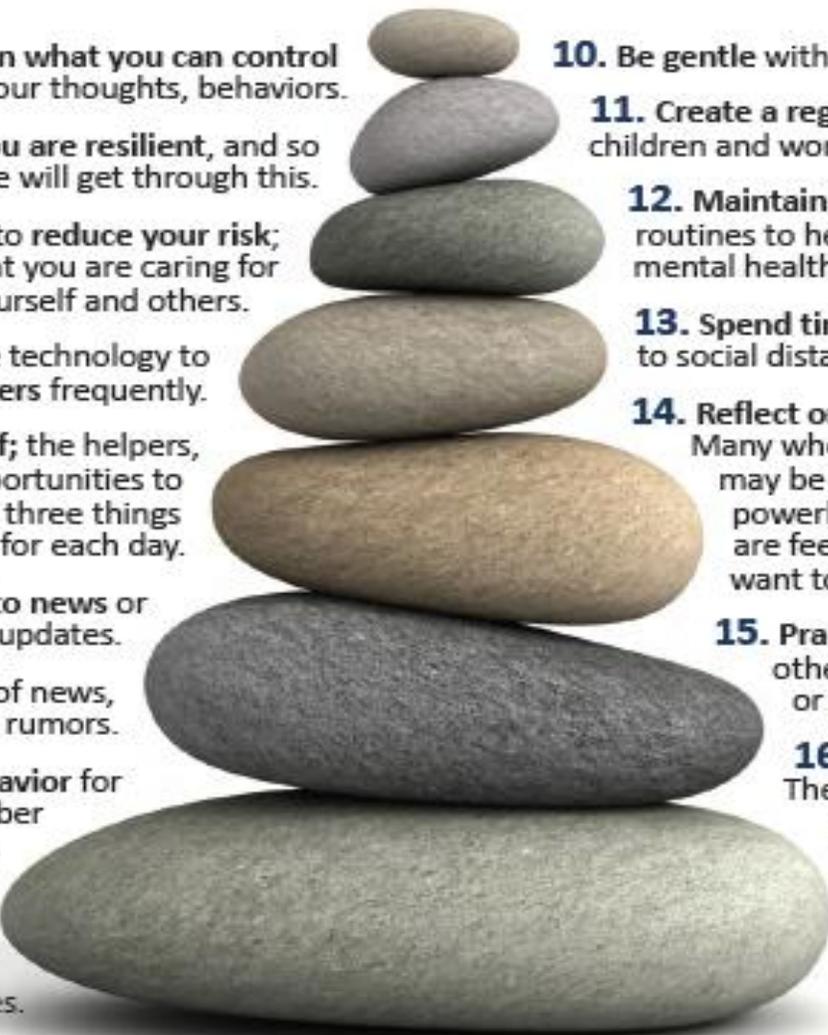
# Exercise: connecting with others

- Think of someone who used to have an important part of your life. You have not spoken for a long time or they are not expecting to hear from you now.
- Call them and have a chat.
- How did this make you feel? Why?



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# Mindfulness

- Type of meditation or self reflection
- Without interpretation or judgment
- May involve breathing techniques, music, or other audio or visual cues to relax the body and mind and help reduce stress
- **External**—things we say, hear, see, do. Typically more familiar to us, and often difficult or unsettling to turn off.
- **Internal**—what we think or feel inside. Focus is entirely within, shutting off any interaction with the outside world. Many of us spend very little time here, if we do not turn off external stimulation.

# Outcomes of mindfulness

- **Reduce stress**
- Sleep better
- Listen more
- Think clearer
- Come closer together and strengthen relationships
- Turn off, step back, recharge
- Act wiser
- Live healthier

“Think before we speak, read before we think.”

- Fran Lebowitz

# Moving forward: take care of yourself!

- <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/mh.html#coping1>
- <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/mhtips.pdf>
- <https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/responders.asp>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/buddy-system.pdf>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/initiatives/resource-center/pdf/Workplace-Physical-Activity-Break-Guide-508.pdf>



There is someone out there who understands you, who respects you, and who is listening.

**Dr. Hawthorne Smith**

