



Lutheran Counseling
& Family Services

TEMPO

Fall
2020

Lutheran Counseling and Family Services of Wisconsin
...where Christian caring makes the difference!

COVID and Caregiving: The Physical and Mental Effects of COVID on Those Caring for Others

Caregivers are not just found in hospitals or health facilities. A caregiver is anyone responsible for the health and wellness of others, including parents caring for their children, spouses caring for their partners, adults caring for their aging parents and friends taking responsibility for friends or neighbors.

So far 2020 has all the ingredients to put mental health concerns on a steroid path to high concern. Life has been interrupted at all levels – a general concern about the economy, social anxiety over equality, fear of contracting COVID-19 or spreading it to a loved one, and general unease over ‘normality’ being interrupted, altered or canceled.

That's a lot to handle individually. But for caregivers, the levels of stress rise incrementally. How do we care for the caregivers?

The advice on an airplane is to give yourself the oxygen mask first before assisting others. Caregivers must do the same. Provide self-care and then find a balance. With mental health concerns, the answers are often very simple...just not easy. It's hard to apply the oxygen first when others are desperate for help.

The first step in sustaining balance is to recognize the triggers - or warning signs - that a break is needed from caregiving. A daily self-check is a good starting point. Are you feeling overwhelmed today? Have you been uncharacteristically irritable or sad? Are you experiencing physical symptoms like exhaustion, weight changes or unexplained pain?

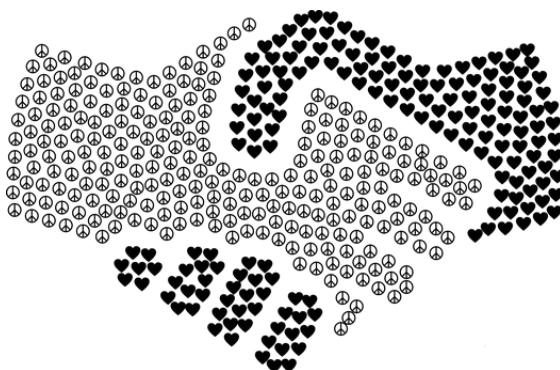
Reassurance is also important. It's okay to vent frustrations or emotions. It's okay to feel frightened or uneasy. It's okay to spend a little on yourself – alone time, a shopping spree or a solitary walk. It's okay to forgive yourself if you didn't meet all expectations set upon you. The answer is simple – ask for help. It's just not easy. Caregivers generally do not ask for the help they need. It's just not in their nature. But the truth is that someone will answer the call and will step in or step up to help. Just keep asking.

Then there are the don'ts. Don't feel guilty. You are doing the best you can and that is enough. Don't feel like you can solve all the problems or go this alone. There are plenty of support groups, services, friends or family who can pitch in to help if you reach out to them. Don't obsess over the daily news, the “fun” you see others having on social media, or in worries that are bigger than yourself. This is a historically challenging time for everyone. You are not alone. Together we will see it pass.

Again there's a simple answer – be patient. But it's not easy. Quieting yourself and accepting that the situation is out of your control is hard. Keep your faith and your body strong. Remember that God will not give us more than we can bare.

If you are mentally struggling and at a breaking point, be honest with yourself about it. Seek help. Professional counselors like those at LCFS can help you. You can talk through your feelings and they will help you establish a plan to cope and manage through this challenging time. Help, support, encouragement is just a phone call away. This is a test of your faith, perseverance and patience. You can do hard things....you already have! This time the answer is easy – make the call.

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” ~Romans 12:12



In the Interest of Children

For over 40 years LCFS has offered an In School Counseling program to help children who are experiencing mental health or behavioral issues either at home or in the school environment. Thousands of children have benefited from the expertise and guidance of LCFS's school counselors and classrooms have become more productive and successful.

With COVID-19, as schools struggle to identify ways to keep children safe, socially distanced, hold in-person classes or on-line learning, LCFS counselors have also been preparing to meet the mental health concerns of children living through these unprecedented times.

The pandemic has had an effect on all of us and children are experiencing the fear, uncertainty and confusion as well. In a survey conducted by Save the Children (April 2020) of 15,000 households, 49% of children expressed feelings of worry over a loved one catching COVID-19, 34% reported being scared, 27% anxious, 23% stressed and 22% felt an overwhelming feeling of unhappiness. Over 75% of parents said they were extremely worried about their child's emotional and mental wellbeing.

Not mentioned in the survey were the vulnerabilities of children – those who don't have access to enough food at home, without means to online learning or those spending more time in abusive home environments. Add to this the rise of social protests, a strong political divide and other oddities from strange weather to murder hornets and the children of 2020 are bearing the brunt of the world around them.

Experts looking at past crisis situations and the effects on school age children are projecting a spike in children requiring mental health services not only as they return to school, but months afterward. Pediatric mental health experts foresee more children experiencing irrational fears, sleep disturbances, separation anxiety, displaced anger and enhanced withdrawal. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction is suggesting increases in one-on-one counseling, school-wide mental health interventions and additional training for teachers and parents.

LCFS is ready.

The immediate goals of LCFS's school counselors was to stay connected with children and ensure them that while it's normal to feel concerned, there are experts around the world working hard to keep us safe. They also developed personal treatment plans for each student specific to COVID-19 worries to develop coping techniques, identify "what can I do?" solutions, and instill confidence and hope.

Thanks to grant support, LCFS was able to purchase new computers and technology that will allow counselors to connect with all students in the schools served and be fully active on a virtual platform.

The pandemic forced everyone to become much more comfortable with the "virtual experience". As a result, schools are reporting parents being more engaged with teachers, administrators and counselors. With the ease and convenience of meeting virtually, many have become far more open to seeking mental health counseling for their child and have become actively involved in treatment plans and aligning behaviors. Counselors have joined in on more parent/teacher/administrator meetings regarding a child's care, resulting in better collaboration and results.

By attending open houses, conferences and providing teacher in-services – whether virtually or in person, counselors become a trusted member of the school community and help to break down any negative stigmas surrounding mental health care.

And the children are benefitting. With extensive background in child, adolescent and family counseling, LCFS's counselors are able to combine clinical expertise with the importance of spiritual beliefs in putting problems and challenges into perspective. They are helping children by reducing anxiety, monitoring depression, teaching ways to control behaviors, identify triggers and creating solutions. Each student in the care of an LCFS counselor is treated with respect and dignity, with the goal of obtaining happiness, stability and success.

The pandemic may have changed the way we communicate and relate, but it hasn't changed the way we care for each other, love our children and provide the best possible outcomes for their futures.

We Are Family ~ A Story of Adoption

It's a memory that I will never forget; I was at work doing a few odds and ends at the conclusion of the school day, when I saw a call coming in from our adoption case worker. Immediately, my mind was playing out a thousand different scenarios about just what she wanted to talk about, so I was a little hesitant to answer. But when the voice on the other end told me that my wife and I had been chosen by a birth mother...well let's just say it was one of the happiest moments of our lives!

The next few weeks were a blur; we had a short two months (or so we thought) to build a relationship with this amazing person who was entrusting us with a gift. It was very important to us that we truly make a connection with our birth mother, considering the relationship we would have with her moving forward! Texts and phone calls, dinners and trips to Walmart gave us that chance, and we felt so honored and blessed that this was the person the Lord had led us to.

Fast forward to a 4:30 a.m. FaceTime call, 5 weeks before he was due! Our birth mother, as cool as a cucumber, told us that our son had just been born! That next half hour was a mad rush of getting clothes together, making plans for someone to take the dog, and generally being in a state of shock! Mind you, there was a nursery with paint still drying, and furniture yet to be built just across the hall!

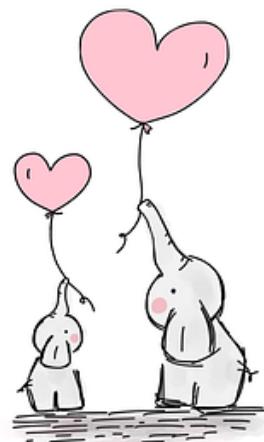
In what had to be quickest drive to the hospital that's ever been, we walked into the room to see the amazing birth mom, and our son. Even though he had come earlier than expected, he was a healthy, and strong baby boy! Words will never be able to express the feeling that we had getting to hold him for the first time...it was the realization of a dream my wife and I had had for the entirety of our relationship. It was hard to believe it was real!

It is incredibly difficult to take the journey that is adoption, and attempt to explain all that it entails! The emotions that the process prompts, all of the decisions that led you to that point, the days and nights of waiting, the amazing moment when you see and hold your child for the first time, honestly the list could go on and on. And it's important to remember even after all the i's have been dotted and the t's have been crossed, adoption is a journey that never truly ends!



Congratulations to the following families on the completion of their adoptions:

Nicole and Matthew on his adoption of their daughter Jordyn, 1/13/2020
David and Carolin on the adoption of their daughter Naomi, 2/3/2020
Whitney and Danielle on her adoption of their daughter Devyn, 3/20/2020
Ryan and Kristen on the adoption of their twins Milo and Jax, 5/5/2020
Zachary and Sara on his adoption of their son Brodee, 5/5/2020
Lumpree and Mallory on the adoption of their son Lumpree IV, 5/21/2020
Christopher and Stephanie on the adoption of their son Riley, 5/16/2020
Christopher and Elizabeth on the adoption of their daughter Arianna, 3/6/2020
Alex and Anna on his adoption of their daughter Ellette, 7/7/2020
George and Amanda on the adoption of their son Cole, 7/7/2020
William and Ashley on his adoption of their children Amelia and Aleric, 2/17/2020
Michael and Molly on his adoption of their child Abigail, 4/10/2020
David and Beatriz on his adoption of their children Stephania and Cesar, 6/9/2020
Jeffrey and Trina on the adoption of their son Malachi, 8/17/2020
TJ and Jessica on the adoption of their son Dominic, 8/7/2020
Christian and Rachel on his adoption of their daughter Dollsinaya, 8/28/2020
Daniel and Tracy on her adoption of their son Caden, 9/8/2020
Charles and Laura on his adoption of their daughter Talia, 9/8/2020



A Message from the CEO—Deb Rayburn

Dear Friends,
How are you doing? Yes of course you are social distancing, wearing masks and limiting activities. But how are you really doing?

Are you keeping active and healthy? Are you having quality conversations and experiences with your loved ones? Are you managing changes and adapting to new routines? Are you finding ways to release pent up anxieties or harboring them within?

Changes can take a toll on mental health. Daily stressors can creep up and suddenly the world seems too overwhelming. Anxiety, depression, or isolation set in, leaving you feeling trapped or helpless.

LCFS counselors help people restore their mental health. They guide people back to their faith and teach skills to cope, release and manage feelings.

Ask yourself and those you care about how they are doing. Offer your assistance. Pitch in and ease the load. Let them know agencies like LCFS are available to help. Remind them that seeking care can be the best way to care for ourselves and each other.

Be safe. Be well. ~ Deb



PLEASE USE THESE FUNDS TO FURTHER LCFS'S MISSION

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

Gift Amount: (please check)

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$200 \$500 Other

I would like to learn more about LCFS's free Planned Giving Services.

I would like to receive LCFS's newsletter email

LCFS Thrift Stores

LCFS operates five thrift stores which help to support services for adoption, mental health, family counseling and substance abuse. Each store is run by amazing volunteers and support their communities by providing an outlet for clothing and household items to be reused and repurposed, offering affordable prices and by donating surplus items to local homeless or veteran shelters.

All stores are now open with new safety and sanitation policies for donations and shopping. Please consider supporting these essential stores and the mission they support. Volunteers are in need at each store for a variety of tasks and services. Hours and additional information can be found at www.lcfswi.org.

Second Time Around

102 West Franklin
Berlin, WI 54923
(920) 361-0334

Yours, Mine & Ours

Thrift Shop
1620 South Main Street
Rice Lake, WI 54868
(715) 234-1137

The Shepherd's Attic

10 West Main Street
Chilton, WI 53014
(920) 849-9250

LCFS Thrift Shop
2324 E. Richmond Street
Shawano, WI 54166
(715) 526-9092

The Economy Center

7814 West Burleigh Street
Milwaukee, WI 53222
(414) 442-2272



ONLINE: Donations can be made through PayPal at www.lcfswi.org

CREDIT CARD. Please enter the following information:

Credit Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____

CVV (card verification value): _____

Card Holder's Name: _____

Signature: _____

CHECKS Payable to: LCFS—WI
3800 N. Mayfair Rd. Wauwatosa, WI 53222

LCFS Contact Information
Web Site—www.lcfswi.org ~ Follow us on Facebook!

Telephone Numbers

Main Office—414-536-8333

Toll Free (Southern Wisconsin)—800-291-4513

Toll Free (Northern Wisconsin)—888-867-4840

E-mail Addresses

General—lcfswi.org

CEO—Deb Rayburn, MS, LPC, CSAC, CSIT drayburn@lcfswi.org