



Overcoming Challenges and Nurturing Resilience:

Strategies and Tools for Staying Connected, Safe, and Strong



Today's Goals

- **Examine how today's challenges affect us personally**
- **Consider how these affect the people around us and our relationships**
- **Identify skills and strategies to manage challenges competently**
- **Learn about available resources**
- **Discover how to tap into personal strengths and unique talents**



The Perfect Storm: The Global Pandemic, Worldwide Political and Social Unrest, Unprecedented Weather & Fire Events

What exactly are the challenges facing us?

- COVID-19: A Global Pandemic – something most of us have never experienced before
- Increasing awareness of economic and racial inequalities, resulting in political unrest across our country and the world
- More frequent violent and destructive fires and weather events
- Conflicting and contradictory information from leaders and news sources

On Its Own, the COVID-19 Pandemic is Uniquely Challenging!

- **SUDDEN, UNEXPECTED IMPACT:** In one month identified cases in NYS increased from one to 83,000
- A **GLOBAL** challenge – pandemic is everywhere, everyone is affected
- **INVISIBLE:** a threat that is not seen, elemental and unknown
- **DISRUPTION** of daily life & everyday routines suddenly and in unimaginable ways
- **ECONOMIC** concerns: recession, loss of income, housing: what will happen?
- **UNCERTAIN TIMELINE:** how long will this last? How long can you endure it?

Social Determinants of COVID-19

Underline Racial, Economic, and Ethnic Inequalities


Finding quality and affordable housing is more difficult for American Indians, African Americans, Hispanics and Latinx than others; crowded living situations increases risk for COVID infection

Lower income earners experience significant lack of access to equal and affordable health care, compromising healthcare in general and increasing risk for untreated/undiagnosed COVID-19

More essential workers are African American, Hispanic, American Indian, & Latinx; their work exposes them to the virus more frequently

Older people are at greater risk for dying of COVID-10: rate of death for people aged 30 – 39 is **45 times** higher than for people aged 17-29; **7900 times** higher for people over 85

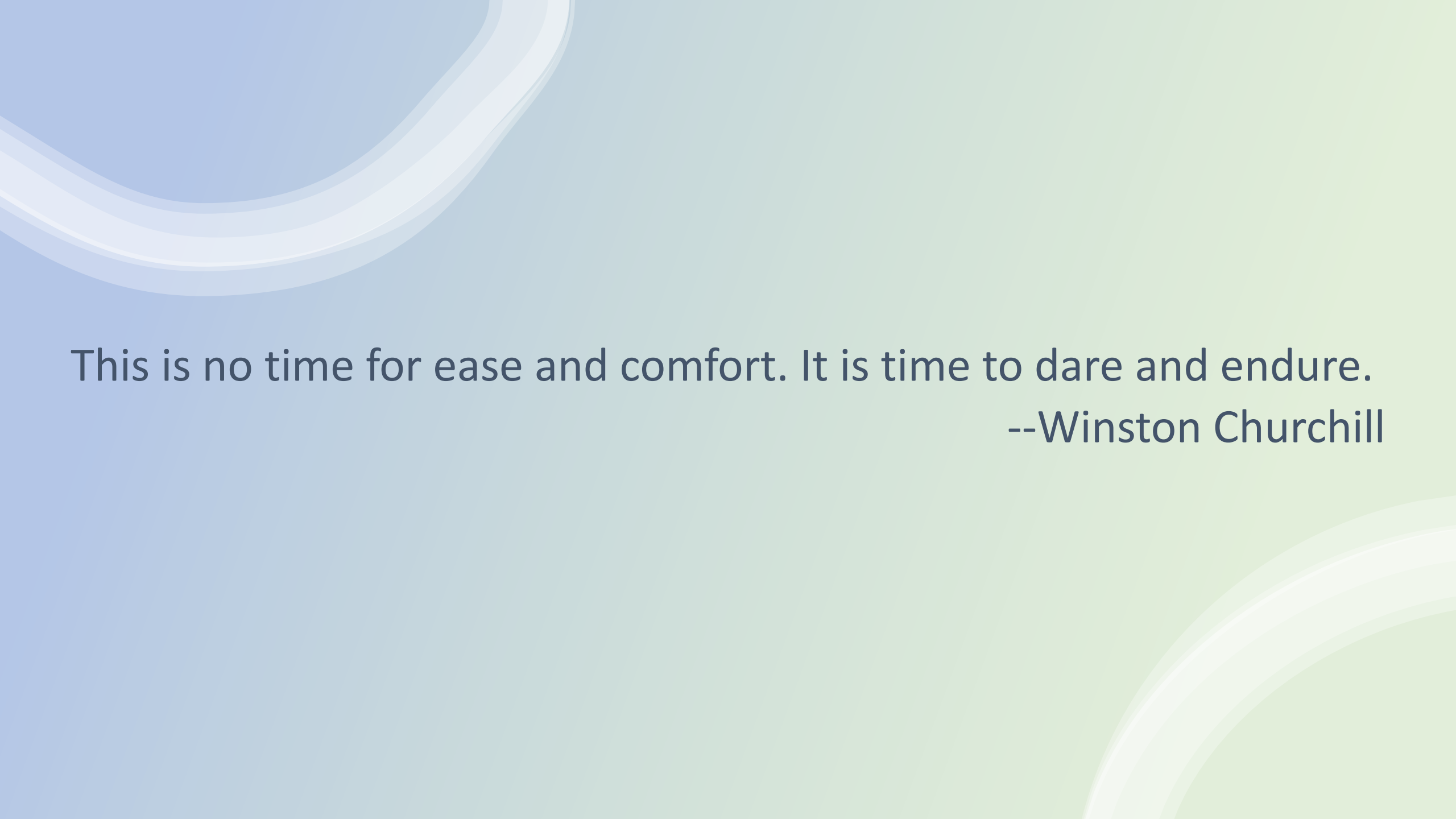
People with disabilities and people who are elderly are more likely to live in congregate care settings, placing them at increased risk for contracting COVID-19



Unprecedented
weather events &
wildfires add to
the stress of the
global pandemic

2020 was a record-breaking year across the globe:

- In the USA alone, there were 30 named storms during the hurricane season, far above normal
- In Australia, California, and Colorado wildfires burned out of control
- In Siberia, temperatures reached almost 100° melting permafrost & contributing to wildfires



This is no time for ease and comfort. It is time to dare and endure.
--Winston Churchill

A disruption in our nervous systems....

“...a lot of what is happening in COVID [is] a disruption in our nervous system. The mind-body connection is actually quite sensitive to both what is real and what is imagined. So much of 2020 has been filled with uncertainty, and our brains do not like uncertainty.”

Christine Runyan, PhD

Professor of Family Medicine & Community Health

Source: University of Massachusetts Medical School

<https://www.umassmed.edu/news/news-archives/2020/12/mental-health-concerns-rise-as-covid-fatigue-deepens/>

Stress Responses: A Matter of Degree!

- Physical: anxiety, hypervigilance
- Cognitive: difficulty concentrating & making decisions; feeling paralyzed
- Emotional: guilt, sorrow, loneliness, missing important milestones in life
- Spiritual: despair, loss of hope, feelings of isolation and being abandoned
- Behavior: change in sleep patterns; changes in appetite; increased use of tobacco, alcohol; changes in activity levels – restlessness, lethargy

Caregivers Face Additional Challenges

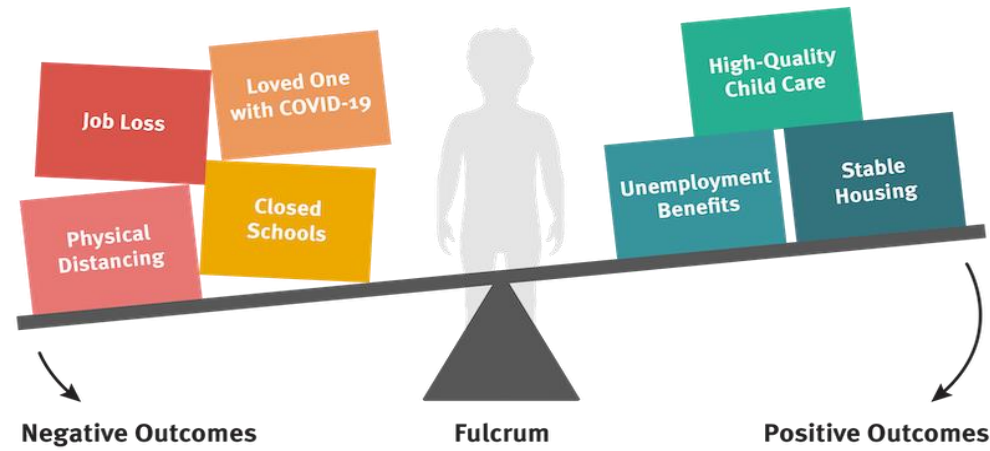
- *EXPECTATION* to care for others, maintain ongoing functioning and routines despite the disruption of everything “normal”
- *EXTREME RESPONSIBILITIES*: Others rely on them for answers, guidance, care – personal family, people being supervised, people being cared for, co-workers
- *FRUSTRATION ESCALATES*: lack of information, lack of resources, maximum effort put forth, yet results remain uncertain and unpredictable
- *GUILT*: not being able to care for family, placing family at greater risk of illness
- *BURN-OUT*: increased emotional demands, limited or non-existent opportunities for rest and respite



When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change 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 Frankl



Build Resilience: Achieve Balance: Build Resilience

Source: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/how-to-help-families-and-staff-build-resilience-during-the-covid-19-outbreak/>

Psychological resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress

- “Bouncing back” from stress and traumatic events
- Empowers you to grow and improve your life
- Doesn’t protect you from life’s twists and turns but gives you the tools you need to come out on the other side

Building Blocks of Resilience:

CONNECTION



WELLNESS

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MEANING



HEALTHY THINKING



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Source: <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience>

Maintain Connections



- Stay in touch with family, friends, and other loved ones – using phone, video chats, social distancing
- Continue to honor normal milestones – birthdays, holidays, and other celebrations
- Set aside time to acknowledge and feel grief and loss, your own and with your friends and other loved ones
- Find ways to share meaningful experiences – like cooking similar recipes and sharing the results, watching the same movies or TV shows, playing games online
- Acknowledge and celebrate your gratitude towards the people you love – for sharing this time and being in your circle
- Social distancing does not mean losing your sense of humanity: we are social creatures and need each other to feel whole

Practice Wellness

- Take care of your body! Self-care is an effective tool
- Maintain good nutrition and hydration
- Get fresh air and exercise
- Develop and maintain a regular & balanced routine of work and leisure activities
- If you work from home, establish an area of your home that is a designated work space
- Get enough sleep and practice good “sleep hygiene”
- Develop a regular meditation practice as a way to manage stress





Healthy Thinking

- Practice “thought monitoring” to nurture balanced and hopeful ways of thinking and avoid tendencies to envision difficult or traumatic outcomes
- Don’t spend too much time watching disturbing news or engaging with negative threads on social media
- Develop routines that include regular opportunities to do things that are relaxing and enjoyable -- read, watch movies, play games, socialize
- Avoid indulging in too much alcohol or other substances
- Acknowledge your emotions: it is normal to feel frightened, sad, lonely in response to events
- Reach out to a mental health professional, clergy person or emotional helpline if you feel “stuck” or unable to function

Meaning

Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual.” --Viktor Frankl

- Nurture purposeful activities in your daily life
- Provide support and compassionate attention to others
- Volunteer in some way if possible
- Engage in activities that promote self-discovery; build new skills; enhance existing skills
- Set daily goals for yourself and acknowledge your sense of accomplishment as you achieve these
- Practice Mindfulness or other meditation





Practice Healthy Thinking

- Source: University of California at San Francisco, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences <https://psychiatry.ucsf.edu/copingresources/covid19>





I CAN CONTROL

(So, I will focus on these things.)

MY POSITIVE
ATTITUDE

TURNING
OFF THE
NEWS

FINDING FUN
THINGS TO DO
AT HOME

HOW I FOLLOW CDC
RECOMMENDATIONS

LIMITING MY
SOCIAL MEDIA

MY OWN SOCIAL
DISTANCING

MY KINDNESS &
GRACE



Practice Mindfulness

Mindful Meditation is a meditation practice in which you focus your attention to what you are experiencing/sensing/feeling/hearing in the moment



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Benefits of Meditation

- Understand your emotions
- Lower your stress
- Connect with yourself and with others
- Improve focus
- Reduce brain chatter
- Lower blood pressure



Mindfulness Exercises



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Pay Attention: Take the time to notice the elements in your environment: what do you see, hear, smell?

Live in the Moment: Focus your attention on what you do every day with an open, attentive attitude; try to find pleasure in your everyday activities

Focus on your Breathing: When negative thoughts intrude, close your eyes and pay attention to your breathing, as it moves in and out of your body

Body Scan Meditation: Lie on your back with your arms extended and your arms at your side, palms up. Close your eyes and let your attention focus on each part of your body, noticing how it feels, if there is any tension, pain, or emotions associated with it.

Sitting Meditation: Sit with your back straight and your hands in your lap. Focus on your breath as it moves in and out of your body. If your attention wanders, bring it back to a focus on your breathing

Walking Meditation: Find a quiet space of about 10-20 feet and begin to walk back and forth within this space. Focus on your movements, your balance, your breath, and any other sensations that enter your awareness.

Project Hope: New York's COVID-19 Emotional Support Helpline

- Free, confidential, and anonymous
- Connects callers with trained crisis counselors who understand the challenges they are confronting
- Reaching out for emotional support is a strength – part of building resilience
- Provides links to additional resources designed to help you relax, cope, meditate
- <https://nyprojecthope.org>
- Emotional Support Helpline: **1-844-863-9314**



Maintaining Health & Connections Through Telehealth

- Telehealth allows you to connect with your healthcare provider remotely, using a computer or other device
- Comfortable and convenient – no need to drive to an appointment, able to connect from your own home
- Avoid exposure to infection and other hazards
- Many practitioners believe telehealth provides a better assessment opportunity – seeing the person in their own home
- Telepsychiatry offers regular connection during the isolation of the pandemic

The Silver Lining: Coming Out Stronger and Wiser

Appreciation of Life

Improved relationships with others

Awareness of new possibilities in life


Recognition of personal strength

Spiritual awakenings and change

Personal Growth Often Occurs through Traumatic Stress Experiences



*Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the
overcoming of it. --Helen Keller*



Thank you for your time
and your thoughts!