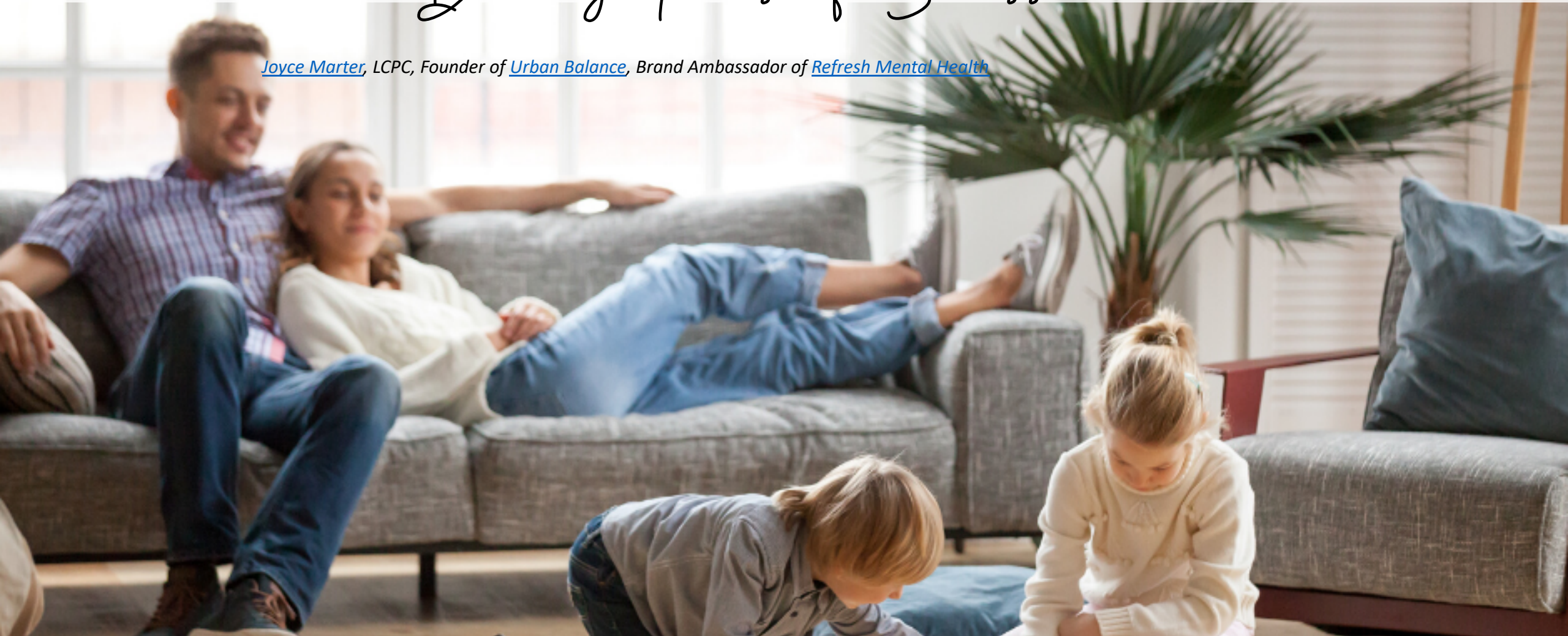


# Family Communication Dynamics

## During Times of Stress

[Joyce Marter](#), LCPC, Founder of [Urban Balance](#), Brand Ambassador of [Refresh Mental Health](#)



# Resources

Presentation Slides  
Resourceful Links  
Additional Information

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# Stressors for Essential Workers

- Fear of contracting the virus
- Fear of infecting loved ones (if living together with family)
- Isolation & loss (if living separate from family)
- Chronic trauma
- Feelings of anxiety and overwhelm
- Pressure and hyper-responsibility
- Dealing with stigma
- Fears of unknown and uncertainty of the future
- Feelings of guilt or resentment



# Stressors for Family Members of Essential Workers

- Fear and concern for health and safety of the essential employee, themselves, and other family
- Adjustments to working from home (if they also work)
- New demands with parenting or homeschooling
- Challenges managing uncertainty and change
- Loneliness
- Resentment, anger or guilt





# Mental Health Implications

- Acute Stress Disorder
- PTSD
- Secondary trauma
- Increase in anxiety and depression
- Adjustment disorders
- Substance abuse
- Relationship conflict
- Feelings of grief and loss
  - Changes in routine
  - Loss of social support
  - Cancelled events or inability to attend events
- Loneliness and isolation
- Difficulty concentrating
- Distorted sense of time



# External Sources of Stress

- Workplace requirements
- Household duties
- Dependent care
- Parenting responsibilities
- Unexpected events: COVID-19
  - Finances
  - Health and safety
  - Togetherness





# Internal Sources of Stress

- Unrealistic expectations
- Negative thinking
- Self-sabotaging behaviors
- Poor self-care habits
- Not accessing support



# Signs & Symptoms of Stress

- Physical
- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Social
- Financial





# What is Stress?

# What is Burnout?

- Stress is the body's physical and psychological response to anything perceived as overwhelming
- Burnout is a state of emotional and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress



# Signs and Symptoms of Burnout

## Feelings of:

- Powerlessness
- Hopelessness
- Detachment
- Isolation
- Irritability
- Frustration
- Failure
- Despair
- Cynicism
- Apathy
- Emotional exhaustion

## Decrease in:

- Self-esteem
- Concentration
- Memory

## Increase in:

- Error Rate
- Absenteeism
- Hypochondria
- Sleep disruption



# Practical Strategies for Today

- Increase coping skills
- Improve communication & conflict resolution
- Build resilience



# Prioritize Your Own Wellbeing

- Practice self-care
  - Sleep
  - Nutrition
  - Exercise
  - Leisure





# Structure Your Days & Weeks

- Self-care
  - Breaks
- Sleep schedule
- Meals
- Work time
- Dependent care
- Support
- Reading or watching the news once or twice daily
- Time for solitude and connection—issues with space



# Stay in the Present Moment

- Avoid second-guessing the past or worrying about the future
- Mindfulness practices
  - Deep breathing, meditation, yoga
- One day at a time



# Practice Compassion

- Reflect empathy to your loved one
- Don't assume you know what they are feeling
- Don't minimize or agree with feelings
- Give space and time





# Practice Self-Compassion

- Honor your feelings
- Don't judge or ignore your feelings
- Turn down volume of Inner Critic
- Practice self-forgiveness



# Control what you can, let go of the rest

- What you can control:

- Your own thoughts
- Your own emotions
- Your own behaviors
- Your own choices

- What you can't control:

- Other people's thoughts
- Other people's emotions
- Other people's behaviors
- Other people's choices
- Outcome
- COVID-19
- What else?

# Access Support

- Connect with loved ones online
- Participate in online support groups and communities
- Utilize teletherapy
- Avoid isolating with your feelings





# Keep Your Thinking Positive

- Turn down volume of your inner critic
- Detach from fear
- Avoid catastrophic thinking
- Practice the power of affirmations and mantra



# Practice Gratitude

- Look at the good parts
- Give thanks
- Keep a gratitude journal



# Detach with Love

- Detachment doesn't mean you don't care, aren't connected or are in denial
- Detachment is a mindfulness practice that involves:
  - Healthy separation
  - Not attaching your wellbeing to others
  - Not trying to control others
  - Not getting hooked
  - Not becoming defensive
- Lifeguard analogy





# Detach From:

- Your own negative emotions like fear, anxiety, anger and sadness
- The negative emotions of others
- Expectations
- Outcome (embrace uncertainty)



# Detachment Strategies

- Zoom out
- Movie screen
- Visualization of protective barrier
- Unhook
  - Drop your end of the rope
  - Do the next right thing



# The Nature of Conflict



Control



Power



Contrasting Beliefs



Hurt feelings/bruised egos



Fear



Misunderstanding







# Avoid Behaviors that Add Fuel to the Fire

- Criticism
- Contempt
- Stonewalling
- Defensiveness



Dr. John Gottman

# Conflict Styles

- Passive
- Aggressive
- Assertive
- Passive Aggressive
- Avoidant



# Develop your Emotional Intelligence

- 1 Know your emotions.
- 2 Manage your own emotions.
- 3 Motivate yourself.
- 4 Recognize & understand the other people's emotions.
- 5 Manage relationships (manage the emotions of others.)

Adapted from Daniel Goleman's book "Emotional Intelligence"





# Low EQ

- Emotionally triggered
- Aggressive, passive or passive aggressive
- Participation in:
  - Scapegoating
  - Blaming
  - Bullying
  - Gossiping



# High EQ

- Low insecurity
- High openness
- Assertive
- Self-aware
- Inclusive
- Respectful
- Takes responsibility for actions



# Practical Solutions

- ✓ Avoid a fight, flight or freeze response
- ✓ Avoid engaging tug-of-war
- ✓ Don't lock horns
- ✓ Unhook from the minutia
- ✓ "Zoom out" to gain perspective





# Practical Solutions

- ✓ Become rooted in the present
- ✓ Let go of Defensiveness
- ✓ Take Responsibility
- ✓ Appreciate the Power of Empathy
- ✓ Practice flexibility, adaptability & compromise



# Support Your Loved One

- Ask for what they need
- Consider their love language
- Provide encouragement
- Reflect appreciation
- Honor their service
- Nurture your relationships



# Use Assertive Communication

- Neither passive, aggressive, nor passive-aggressive
- “I” Statements (kind, necessary, true?)
- Honest, direct, clear, polite requests
- No triangulation
- Face-to-face best, then voice to voice, etc. No fighting via email or text
- Collaborate to find compromise
- Be open to discussion to find win-win
- Diplomacy



# Talking to Kids

- Remain calm and reassuring
- Avoiding scaring them with your fears and concerns
- Make yourself available to talk and listen
- Pay attention to what they see in media--debrief
- Give children age-appropriate information



# Forgive Yourself and Others

“

*Resentment is like  
drinking poison and  
then hoping it will kill  
your enemies.*

– Nelson Mandela

”



# Remember: This is Temporary

“And this too, shall pass.”





# Resilient People

- Understand that challenges are a part of life
- Promote health and wellbeing
- Enjoy connection & collaboration
- Are open, flexible and adaptive
- Are emotionally intelligent
- View challenges as opportunities
- Learn from mistakes
- Avoid worrying
- Have a sense of humor even when stressed



# Key Components to Building Resilience

- Prioritize your mental health & wellbeing
- Seek and give support
- Strive for work/life balance
- Engage fully in life; don't isolate yourself
- Discover & develop a sense of purpose or meaning in life



# Comprehensive Mental Health Resources & Information

- Care for Your Coronavirus Anxiety Toolkit
- National Alliance on Mental Illness Information & Resource Guide with FAQ's
- Ten Percent Happier Coronavirus Sanity Guide
- CDC Coronavirus Stress & Coping Resources
- Mental Health America: COVID-19 Information & Resources



# Counseling & Therapy Resources

- [United Healthcare](#) has launched a free (to anyone) 24/7 support line staffed by mental health experts: Call 866-342-6292
- Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a [Crisis Counselor](#)
- Most insurance companies are covering teletherapy and some like Aetna have waived copays for telemedicine.
- [Urban Balance](#) is an insurance-friendly counseling practice with 8 offices in Chicagoland, 3 in Denver, 2 in Dallas, 1 in St. Louis and 1 in Louisville that provides teletherapy.
- [PsychologyToday's Find-A-Therapist Directory](#)



# Meditation Resources

- [Calm: 30 Days Free](#)
- [Headspace: Free Trial](#)
- [Jack Kornfield: Compassion in the Time of Coronavirus](#)



# Resources

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Thank  
You!



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