

How to help when you're feeling helpless

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Welcome to today's webinar. How to help when you're feeling helpless. My name is Lynn Borteck and I'm happy to be bringing you today's webinar.

Today's objective

Today's objectives are to help everyone understand what the effects of COVID-19 are, ways that we can still do good and feel good during COVID-19, and finally, who helping helps. And that's not a misprint or a typo, it's meant to be, it's a little confusing, who helping helps. And we'll get back to that.

COVID-19 is hard on everyone

COVID-19 has been hard on everybody. People have been experiencing job changes, losses, furloughs, layoffs, lots of financial worries, business problems, of course, boredom, physical distancing and isolation from people who they care about. And a lot of fear and a lot of anger, and a lot of frustration and stress about not knowing what comes next.

Lots of stress, little relief

And when there's a lot of stress and not a lot of relief, that becomes pretty difficult to take. And if you're a person who has great stress outlets, like maybe you go for a massage once and awhile, well, during COVID-19 when people were social distancing, that's probably not accessible to you. Or if you go out to a concert or something like that, that may not be accessible to you. And also, you probably just miss being face to face with other people. You know, the social distancing is really hard. Overall, life is just feeling so unpredictable and abnormal and it really is very, very stressful.

You feel helpless...but you're not

You may feel helpless but the fact is you're not. COVID-19 can make us feel helpless in a lot of ways and make us feel that we don't have any control or power, but that is not true. And the fact is when we do feel that we don't have control or power, we start to get depressed or we can get depressed and anxious, and just be in terrible distress. But it's very important for you mentally, and physically to realize that you do have the power and the control to do certain things for yourself and others.

When you help someone, you...

You know when you help anybody you have a lot of reactions yourself. First of all, you take back control over a situation that may feel out of your control. You add meaning to your everyday and I know with everybody being home, it may be difficult to feel that you are adding purpose, adding value. You connect with others in a specific way by helping them. You feel great about yourself and you can get lots of mental well-being out of helping, including less depression if you're feeling depressed. And it also makes you part of the human community which we're all part of. Whether we're extroverts, or introverts, or a little bit of both.

We're all human beings and we're all part of the human community. And in fact, I want to introduce a word that you may not have heard before called helper's high. When you help someone else and you feel great about it, it can actually make you feel high, almost high with happiness. It's the same thing that runner's get, the runner's high. At a certain point endorphins, which are feel good hormones, are released into your system and you actually feel great.

What are some things you can do?

So, what are some things you can do? Well, number one is to take care of yourself. Because if you don't take care of yourself you can't take care of anybody else. So you want to do all the things that we have been recommended to do, like wearing a mask, washing your hands a lot, sanitizing surfaces, keeping at a prescribed social distance and following all the guidelines that your local government has setup. Plus, you want to make sure that you're exercising and that you are eating well and getting enough sleep. So that's number one. The first person you have to help is you. And that is definitely within your power.

Use your skills

And then let's get into who you are. You may be someone that has sewing skills and if you have sewing skills, my goodness there's a whole lot of things you can do. You can make masks. You can distribute them. You can sell them. You can give them out for free. You can knit caps and scarves for when it's going to start to get colder again, or crochet afghans for people who may need them. And I bet you have a lot of other skills. Maybe they're not all handicraft skills but other skills that you can use to make something, it doesn't need to be huge. Or you know, an invention, that you just came up with. But something that will make someone else's life a little easier.

If you're going shopping or doing errands

Another thing you can do is if you're young and you're not part of the high risk population and you're going food shopping, you can call someone who you know, who is perhaps elderly, or frail, or at risk, and ask if you can get them anything. In fact, you can do their entire shopping list for them if you want. And then you can deliver their groceries to their front steps and leave them there. Let them know that they're there so that the, again, the social distancing is kept in place because you're delivering them in a no touch method. And perhaps you can wear gloves in addition.

You can offer to run errands. You can share if you have too much of something. And I do want to say that another way to help people is to not hoard. I know particularly at the beginning people were buying way more toilet paper and that kind of thing, paper goods, than they'll ever use. And that's not good because it puts other people at risk. So, try to avoid hoarding, and for goodness sakes, if you do have too much of something and you know someone who is in need, share.

If you can, give blood

If you are able to, if you're eligible to give blood, do it, because the Red Cross is talking about how blood donations are very badly needed from people who are well.

If you're good at technology

If you're good at technology you can set yourself up as a tech expert for other people who don't know how to use video chats, and Zoom, and so forth. Because honestly, the way people are staying connected these days who are still socially distancing and sheltering, is by all of the online wonderful apps that are available to us. But a whole lot of people don't know how to use them. So if you do, and you know people who don't, reach out to them and say let me show you how to use FaceTime, or Skype, or Zoom, or whatever it might be.

Help elders and at-risk people

Make it a point to help older people and people who are at risk. You can check in on them by giving them a phone call once a day or once a week. You can see if those people need anything that you can drop off. Again, wearing gloves so that you're not spreading any kind of virus without knowing it. And you can even become a reader to someone over the phone. This is really kind of interesting, but a lot of people who are visually impaired have people who come to their homes once a week or twice a week, or maybe every day to read the newspaper or books, or whatever and maybe those people can't come right now. You could be the link for that right now. During this period of time you

could offer to do that over the phone. To read them the newspaper, to read a chapter of a book at a time, or something like that. You see, it's really easy to be helpful to someone. And that kind of thing reading them something if they're unable to do it themselves is so important. It may seem so easy to you, but it's not easy to everyone.

Other ideas:

Here are some other ideas. You could adopt or foster a pet. We just adopted a pet and she is just a dream boat. She's also a little bit of a troublemaker, but overall she's a dream boat. We feel great about having adopted her. And she's bringing a lot of fun into our lives at a time that we need it. You can also enjoy all of the fundraisers and concerts that have been on the TV and on the internet. Lots of very famous celebrities and performers doing their thing and then asking for donations. If you're able to donate, that's great. Five dollars or 50 dollars, it doesn't matter. Every penny counts and helps someone who is at great need during this time.

You can schedule regular chat times with friends, families and seniors. I know for me, I have setup a regular Zoom meeting with cousins who I otherwise have not gotten to see in over 10 years. Because they live all over the country and the occasion just doesn't come up. However, these days it's been so important to connect with Zoom that we have been meeting and it's just great to renew those relationships.

More ways to help:

Some other ways to help. If you have some restaurants nearby you or in town, and you want to help them stay in business so that when we are able to start going back to restaurants we can do so, and those restaurants will be in business. What you can do right now is patronize them for takeout food. Now of course, this doesn't have to be every night because it gets expensive, but do patronize them so that they have a way to stay in business. You can also try to give a little bit of money or some money to people who you're not able to use right now who usually provide services for you, like babysitters, or hairdressers, or cleaning people, or trainers, or whoever.

People who provide a service to you and who you've had to distance yourself from. It's really great to help support them through this time, if you're able to. To send them a little bit of money to help them when they're no longer able to do what they usually do for you. How about just being kind? That's a great way to help others, being kind. When you do go to the supermarket, or when you do go anywhere, to take the kindness route rather than the rudeness or, you know, impatience route. I think we all need to feel that we're being kind and that people are being kind to us right now.

Remember what helping does

I want you to remember from this webinar, if nothing else, I want you to remember what helping actually does. It gives you a sense of having a social relationship in that human community that I talked about. And it also helps you with your emotions. It empowers you to provide something to somebody else, and it gives you such a great feeling, no matter how small the help. And so I want to go back to the first slide where I said, who helping helps. Which maybe didn't make sense at that time, but the fact is that helping helps the person who you're helping and it helps you. It's a two-fer.

And it's important to remember that when you do reach out in whatever way you're able to, whether it's a phone call, or a grocery deliver, or sewing masks, or taking food out from your local restaurant. Whatever helping things you can do, they're important and they help you and they help the person that you're helping, as well.

Conclusion

And I want close with this quote. When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping. A quote by none other than Mr. Rogers and I think it's very apt for today's topic. I hope that you'll leave this webinar trying to think about ways that you can help other people. Thank you.

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