

Support each other during traumatic events

Source: Amy Kostelic, extension specialist for family life education, American Psychological Association, University of Maryland Medical Center and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

People who experience a traumatic event like COVID-19 and even those who watch it unfold from a distance, on television for example, can experience negative stress and serious emotional distress. This is because traumatic events are recognized as a threat to one's personal safety and/or the world as you know it. It is also not uncommon for traumatic events to leave us with unanswered questions and uncertainty.

Responding to these situations in a productive manner can help us become stronger individuals and better community and family members. For example, try not to compare yourself to others, as no two people will respond to traumatic events and changes to daily routines the same way. Some people may panic or feel so numb or overwhelmed that they don't even know how to respond, while others respond with anxiety or feel as if they've lost control. Others may experience grief and disbelief. Common reactions to trauma also include rapid heartbeat, sweating, changes in daily activity and sleeping and eating patterns, sensitivity to lights and sounds, increased conflict in relationships, headaches and nausea. It is not uncommon for children to experience bed-wetting.

According to the CDC, many people do not start feeling "normal" again for weeks or even months after a traumatic event ends. If stress symptoms persist or get worse, a person could be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder,

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Family & Consumer Sciences

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and a medical or mental health professional should be contacted for consultation and follow-up.

Research has shown that moving forward and working at resolving one's feelings at the time of a traumatic event is beneficial. This helps a person re-establish a sense of safety and trust. In a time of tragedy, be there for each other. Practice patience and understanding with your family members, friends and co-workers. Realize the additional stress may make them more irritable than normal.

At times family members and friends may feel helpless—not knowing what to do or how to help, but sometimes just being available is more help than you realize. If someone wants to talk to you about their feelings and experience, encourage them and let them share. If you cannot meet face-to-face, use social media or exchange phone calls or hand-written letters in the mail. Be careful not to force people to talk about their feelings or share information about the traumatic event if they are not ready. It can also be helpful to be sure that a person is educated about the situation so that stress is not rising over assumptions and rumors. Preferred outlets for information regarding national and statewide events include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> and the statewide page, <https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/pages/covid19.aspx>.

Be a friend to yourself and others. Check on relatives who live alone. Even in times of social distancing, a phone call can go a long way in making someone feel

loved. Recognize that you and your family and friends will likely experience new or different emotions after everything returns to normal and that it will take time to heal.

The CDC recommends individuals maintain their usual routine as much as possible, be kind, turn to family, friends and community members for support and recognize when things are out of control and help is needed. The American Psychological Association recommends engaging in healthy behaviors such as eating well-balanced meals, staying physically active, sleeping and practicing stress-relief through relaxation and meditation.

For more information on raising healthy families, contact the Russell County Cooperative Extension Service.

Scholarship Opportunity

Russell County Extension Homemakers will be giving a \$500 scholarship to a Russell County resident attending a Kentucky college or university. Application is open to both traditional and non-traditional students. The deadline to apply is April 15. Applications are available at the Russell County Extension Office or online at russell.ca.uky.edu.

Educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expressions, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.

WORSHIP

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their congregations," 3trees Pastor Eric Gilbert said.

Gilbert said efforts to help others yielded an unexpected blessing.

"(It was) beyond anything we ever expected...to be trusted to actually lead other congregations in worship," he said. "To the churches that have contacted us and let us know that, due to illness or lack of technology, you shared 3trees Church's services with your congregations in place of your own....we consider that the highest honor another pastor could ever give us, and we are thankful to be trusted in such a moment as this unique time."

The Russell Springs United Methodist Church (RSUMC) has been streaming their Sunday morning services for over a year, Office Administrator Sherri Robertson Coffey, who is also involved in outreach programs, said.

"Our reasoning (for streaming) at that time was that some sweet people from our congregation had moved out of state, and we thought it would give us an opportunity to maintain a connection to them," she said. "We quickly found that it was very easy to stream and al-

lowed us to reach people that may never step foot in the door of the church."

As COVID-19 became a life-changing event, the church realized they were ahead of the curve in choosing to embrace technology for worship.

"When we made the decision two weeks ago to abide by the Governor's recommendation to avoid large gatherings (including church) it wasn't a difficulty to stream the service," Coffey said. "The exciting thing is that we have become extra intentional about everything we have done in the last two weeks."

"We are putting more effort into every step we take and every decision we make," she said. "We have stepped out of the 'This is what we do' mentality and become increasingly aware of 'How would the Lord want us to handle this?'"

It's a big-picture situation containing small caveats.

"It is a transitional time in the life of the Body of Christ and for our nation," Coffey said. "We have been reminded that serving Christ really has very little to do with being inside the church building. As a matter of fact, our service of Christ should mostly be outside the walls of the building in

which we gather."

Although challenges are ahead, Coffey considers the pandemic "a prime opportunity for the church to be the Body of Christ and to share with others not just words of our faith, but to share our faith in Christ with our actions that come as a result of our faith."

"RSUMC is looking forward to being in the same building for worship together again as soon as it is safe to do so," she said, "but until that time comes, we are just going to serve where we are and do what we can. We are going to pray for each other and our community, make phone calls to our church family to stay connected and love each other from a distance."

Local churches have reported exponential growth in viewers for their Sunday services.

Gilbert said with patience and compassion, the pandemic can lead to prosperity.

"We are sincerely grateful to have served alongside (other churches)," he said. "To those of you who may have tuned into 3trees, but you have a home church, please keep your generosity pointed towards your home church's vision. Your best days are still ahead!"

KDA Streamlines Federal Food Assistance Programs To Allow "Drive-Through" Models

Changes Designed To Limit Human Contact During COVID-19 Pandemic

Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) has streamlined the process of ensuring that food insecure Kentuckians can receive food through two federal programs with a minimum of human contact during the COVID-19 pandemic, Agriculture Commissioner Dr. Ryan Quarles announced today.

The two programs affected by the policy change are The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). TEFAP is a federally funded program that provides food to low-income individuals who meet income guidelines established by U.S. Department of Agriculture. CSFP is a federally funded program for low-income persons at least 60 years of age and above.

Previously, Kentuckians receiving food assistance had to physically enter the food pantries and complete paperwork. Under the new process, food pantries verify verbally that

clients meet federal requirements, a food bank volunteer signs for the client as a proxy, and then a box of food is placed in the trunk of the vehicle. Another model being utilized is a mobile pantry from the food bank. Food banks are responsible for maintaining proper records to verify the program is not abused.

In addition to streamlining TEFAP and CSFP, the KDA announced last week that it sent a letter to U.S. Agriculture Secretary

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KY WIC Participants:

Your KY State WIC office would like to clear the air about false information being seen on social media sites. Your WIC Benefits will not expire early. Keep your current eWIC card. Your current eWIC card will be used for future months WIC food benefits. If you have questions, call your local county health department or contact our KY WIC Help Desk WIC.Helpdesk@ky.gov.



A Message to our Members:

South Kentucky RECC understands the hardship some members will experience during this Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation. Therefore, with the approval of the Kentucky Public Service Commission, SKRECC has suspended disconnections for non-payment, as well as late payment fees, for members, including those utilizing the PrePay Program. We are here to assist you, and as we always have, we will continue working with members to help keep accounts as current as possible, so they won't have a greater hardship in the future.

Office lobbies remain closed. South Kentucky RECC has several alternative methods for paying your bills. In addition to being able to make payments and conduct all forms of business at the drive-thru at each office, bills can be paid by telephone (800) 264-5112, online at www.skrecc.com, by smart phone app (search SKRECC in App or Play stores) or through the Check-Out Program (visit www.skrecc.com for details). We also offer direct withdrawal and have a PrePay program. Members can call their local office or (800) 264-5112 with questions about any of these options.

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