Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Christine Pisani. I'm with the Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities. I'd like to thank you for joining us today for the webinar, helping, coping strategies for families.

We are recording this webinar. The recording and any presentation materials will be available on the council's website. Closed captioning is available today. And I'd like to thank Lisa Doyon for doing this for us. Thank you so much, Lisa. I'd also like to thank Miguel Juarez one of our Spanish interpreters today. Miguel will be interpreting for the panel presenters. And Sande will be interpreting interest questions the Spanish-speaking audience may have in the chat box or on the conference call line we've provided for Spanish speakers.

I'd like to take a minute to thank all of you who have been participating in our webinars as we have been learning how to perfect the ability to provide English and Spanish translation through these webinars. We have been observing many of you learning how to do this also, and for this, we are grateful for your determination and learning to figure this out alongside us. We have one each week so we can provide an inclusive opportunity for everyone we serve in Idaho. Thank you for your patience as we've been learning and improving every week.

At this time, I'd like to spend a little bit of time helping you to navigate the language channels so you may have the best-possible experience today. Richelle Tierney here in our office will walk you through how to choose which language or our audience members would like to hear the presentation. Richelle, thank you so much.

All right. Well, everybody, like Christine said, we have been learning how to use Zoom in a lot of different ways. The best thing is to -- if you're using your phone, to make sure that you dial in using your internet audio, and I'll show you a bracket here. And then also if you're on your PC using your computer audio, this allows you to be able to choose interpretation. So from your PC, you'll notice if you move your mouse around and go down to your control panel which is found at the bottom of the screen, you'll find the interpretation button that looks like a world, and you will click on it. Once you click on that arrow, you'll see either English or Spanish options. Choose the language that you would like to hear so you would click on English for English or Spanish for Spanish. And then you see mute original audio. What that is doing is muting the other language. For some reason, in Zoom, that has been one of the things we have noticed. You'll have to click English or Spanish and then remember to click mute original audio. Tap those three little dots and click on it. Language interpretation, and then you could mute the original audio, so you would uncheck that and click your language that you would want to hear. So English or Spanish. Anyway, I hope that is helpful. If you do need captioning, if you go back to this control panel, I don't have it displayed on this graphic, but there would be closed captioning. You would click it as well and click subtitles, and you'll be able to see the closed captioning.

Thank you, Richelle. So, I want to encourage you to use the chat feature, and for those on the conference call line, to ask questions through those features, if you have questions of the panelists today. At this time, I'd like to introduce our panelist, and one is just showing up today. Blake Blumfield. He joined us from his office. We asked him to run on down here. That was pretty speedy, Blake.

I'd like to introduce our four panelists. We have Dr. Desai who many of already familiar with. He's a board-certified psychiatrist and adjunct associate professor in the at the University of Washington school of medicine. He works with crisis -- with the crisis prevention team here in Idaho with the division of family and children services, department of health and welfare. And he also works in the state of Idaho to help children and adults on the autism spectrum. Dr. Desai believes in and practices holistic approaches to brain wellness that harnesses the power of neuroplasticity to achieve and maintain optimal cognitive and emotional well-being across the life span.

At this time, I'd also like to introduce Blake Brumfield. Blake has significant experience in the mental health and developmental disability programs providing leadership to development of developmental crisis settings management of acute-care psychiatric unit and development of an interagency school-based kindergarten through 12th grade serious emotional disorders program. His experience includes leadership with multiple stakeholders and the development of solutions targeting mental health and developmental disabilities in all settings in the service away continuum.

Our next presenter is Maggie Imlay. She is a board-certified behavioral analyst working with developmental disability for the last ten years. In addition to her role with health and welfare, Maggie provides in-home applied behavioral analysis, therapy to children with autism and works with parents to have strategies to work with their children and decrease problem behavior.

Our last featured guest is Dan Shanahan who serves as a therapy recreation therapist with the population of adults with mental health and intellectual disabilities.

We're thrilled to have this panel of presenters here today, because we've been receiving both through our surveys after the webinars and calls and e-mails from families across the stay of Idaho about the need to address their ability to cope, because they're managing so many hats at this time. They're managing the hat of being the parent, educator, and in many situations, getting curriculum that isn't modified from their teachers and parenting alone is a big job, but when you add on the layers of being educator and that's happening 24/7 without a break, families are having a difficult time at this time. In addition to many of our families have opted not to have service provision within their home to prevent the possibility of COVID-19. So, all of the responsibilities are falling to families. We wanted to provide something for families to help with some coping strategies at this time, and we just send our love and support and every positive thought to you as we know this is very challenging for you at this time. So, at this time, I'm going to turn the presentation over to Dr. Desai and our other three featured guests, and just send our sincere gratitude to all of you for being with us today. Thank you very much.

Hello, everyone. Delighted and honored to be here. I'll be giving some simple tips first, and then I will request my co-panelist, Miss Maggie to give us some thoughts. Then I will request Mr. Dan to give some thoughts, and then my boss, Blake, to give some thoughts, and then we will try and answer some of the questions. So, let me get started. Again, really here in unprecedented time where, because of the pandemic, the stress is just immense for all of us. To me, based on my training, my reading of research on stress management and resilience, my using the same strategies on myself, my clinical experience on guiding my patients and their loved ones, family members, I feel the three core strategies that I would recommend are the following: Of all the three strategies are simple in term of understanding, but not easy to do. The first one is attitude. To me, it's important for us to tell ourselves as soon as we wake up in the morning that -- let’s try and have a positive attitude. The word I use is cool, COOL. Let's have an attitude of curiosity, optimism, open mindedness, meaning we are going to reduce our wish to control the events, and last is love. So, curiosity, optimism, open mindedness, and love. And again, this is an attitude. It's not dependent on external events. We choose to wear, what I call the sunglasses of positive attitude. And again, throughout the day, when the stress happens, and our attitude shifts, we need to remind ourselves: Let me go back to my positive attitude. Let me try to bring back the curiosity and optimism and be able to keep doing that. So that's A. B is breathing. So again, there are ways, if we breathe, that will bring our stress hormone levels down. There are three factors in what I call therapeutic breathing. The first is that we have to try to breathe slowly. The second is that we use our belly to breathe, which means that when we inhale, our belly should come out. When we exhale, our belly should go in. And the third is that we should try and have exhalation longer than inhalation. And there are a lot of neuroscience reasons for this, but the key thing is to realize that if we practice therapeutic breathing or breathing that provides us with relief and healing, as often as possible throughout the day, then our stress hormone levels will come down, and then, our brains will be able to utilize some of the strategies that Maggie and Dan and Blake will share. So, it's important for us to, throughout the day, do whatever we can to keep bringing our stress hormone levels down. And to me, breathing is the easiest, but there are many other strategies. So, A, B. And C stands for what I call changing perspective. And that's, you know, again, it takes time to develop the skill, but if we have certain perspectives, for example, that my kid is just being lazy, your reaction to that might be different than if you think that your kid is undergoing a lot of stress and anxiety. And that's just one example. There are many other examples. But studies have shown that if we change our perspective to a positive one, more meaningful one, then our capacity to manage stress improves. Our resilience improves. So, we'll come to these three things off and on throughout this session but let me stop here. You guys try and digest this information as I switch the mic to Miss Maggie.

Thank you, Dr. Desai. First, I just want to say thank you for having me, and for all of you parents out there. I am in this with you. I'm also trying to navigate, you know, trying to work from home and also provide care occasionally, you know, a few days a week to two very small children. And so the strategies I'm going to talk to you guys about today are things that those days I am hope with -- home with my kids and try to figure out to get work done and keep them occupied, I have to remind myself of these strategies every day. The first thing I want to share goes back to what Dr. Desai said about attitude, one of the easiest things to do is to increase your positive to negative interactions with your children. For every time you're telling them don't, stop, put that down, knock it off, or you catch yourself raising your voice or reprimanding them. For every one of them, we need to have a minimum of four positive interactions, and those positive interactions can be catching them being good. Telling them what they're doing correct. Hugs, kisses, high-fives. But I think when we really stop to look at that, sometimes we find that our kind of negative bucket is getting filled up, and we're not filling up that positive bucket nearly as much as we should. If we can focus on that one thing, that makes a huge difference. Another thing to think about is -- and this comes with catching your child being good. So instead of telling your kiddos what you don't want them to do. Really try and tell them what it is you want them to be doing. So, here's just a really simple example. Stop running in the house. You know, I tell that to my 3-year-old sometimes. And I think what actually I want him to do. Can you please use your walking feet in the house? Kids will do much better if we tell them what it is we want them to be doing instead of just stopping doing what we don't want them to be doing. Another really easy strategy is to -- if there are certain things you have to get done during the day and some of those are nonpreferred things, for example, brushing teeth or doing a homework assignment, an easy way is to make sure that you are kind of structuring your day having your kids do one nonpreferred thing followed by a preferred thing. They're going to be a lot more motivated to do whatever that nonpreferred activity is if they know as soon as they're done, they get to do something really fun. So, if you can kind of flip-flop that throughout the day, you might find your kids are more willing to do those nonpreferred activities, whatever they are for your children. And one last thing, and then I'll be done. Really think about how you can create more motivation by limiting -- if you can limit access to a really highly preferred thing such as the TV or video games, and your kids only get that when they finish their homework or finish their chores, they're going to be more motivated to do those things. So, I'm going to just give you a little example how I use this at home. So, I have a three-and-a-half-year-old. And there are certain things he really doesn't like to do. He doesn't like to get dressed in the morning specifically. And so, he does not get free access to the TV. He only gets to watch TV when he earns it. One way I use this strategy is in the morning, if he can get himself dressed all by himself, and he's able to do that within a 15-minute time frame, then he gets to use one -- or watch one TV show. If I let him watch TV all morning, and then I ask him to get dressed, he would probably look at me and go no way, mom. He's not as motivated because he already watched TV all morning. So, limiting that access and only allowing, you know, your kids access to those really preferred things contingent on them doing a chore or a nonpreferred activity, you might see more success.

Thank you, Maggie. And by the way, you know, I've mentioned this to Christine. Please use my first name. It's complicated. But I want this to be as informal and sort of all together, we are all one community. You don't need to have these hierarchies. As soon as the COVID is over, we'll go back to our hierarchies and yes, Doctor, or no, Doctor. Let me give the microphone now to Dan. Dan, help us out.

Thanks, Dr. Desai. I want to start by saying thanks for having me and involving me in the panel here to help you folks. As with Maggie, a big thing is stay positive as Dr. Desai said as well. Stay positive. Obviously, it creates buy-in and excitement level with our loved ones. You know, another big thing that we're using currently in my facility is we're still getting outside. We still have that ability to get outside and create some social distance. It's hard whenever we're being told to shelter in place or stay home, but there are avenues and places that we can go to away from everyone. We've got open spaces not far out from our cities. We have to take some precautions, obviously, getting to those areas, but by being outside, you're going to have a little less noise in the confinement of space and really have that open space to move and expend energy. Another thing they would suggest would be some challenges. Challenge with some new and exciting opportunities. Some things or, you know, events that have been on the horizon for you. You've thought about doing and maybe haven't gotten the chance to do them. But at this point, you know, if you can get out and do some of those little hiking or some bike riding has been huge with my clientele, and I've seen a buy-in this month, especially, that I hadn't seen for quite a while. So, I think just presenting those, getting some excitement built around those things. You never know what you're going to find that someone potentially hadn't been exposed to, but a simple -- just discussion about it or being outside and seeing things, you can come up with different ideas that just -- they're going to really buy into it. You'll see some really good future coping strategies and behavior or positive that haven't been presented before. So, you know, that's been our big thing. If there's something that you'd like to know, feel free to ask. It's very individualized thing, I realize, and with COVID, it's a pretty challenging time right now for us. I feel like we're all starting to come together on this, and really set the stage for some positive things.

Thank you, Dan. Now I'm going to request my boss Blake. So, I'm going to request Christine to move slightly in one direction and Blake to come into -- We can't see so you need to tell us, Doctor. There you go. Thank you, Blake. So, Blake, help us out with your wisdom and experience. Well, my name is Blake Brumfield and thank you for the invitation. Glad to be here. Our world kind of has been disrupted. It’s different. We're off our schedules. We're off our routines. And home is everything. Home now is school. Home now is my rec center. Home now is home. So, my recommendation is to, one, create those rituals, create those schedules within your home and your family that you would have typically been following. So, if you typically have done school, make sure that school is scheduled and a part of your day when that expectation is that school be completed. Now the trick to school is, especially if you're taking on a new challenge is start easy and make it fun. And that's kind of the trick with school, and Maggie's idea of having something fun afterwards, so scheduled play or scheduled out time or scheduled personal time, whatever the person you're working with, your child, your loved one, whatever they look forward to doing, make sure that's in the schedule too. And you know, signal those transitions. Signal that yeah, we're going to do a little work first and try to make it fun. Then we're going to play. And my favorite form of play is when your child or your young person that you love, they get to lead it. And so, you play their activities. You play their game. You play what they like to do, and the neat thing is you get to show up, and you're Mr. Fun guy. This is where you bring the enthusiasm and the energy, and you make it fun. This is also where you do that secret learning where you're modeling taking turns. You're modeling saying I'm sorry and making amends, and you're modeling accepting no, and you're modeling losing. And it's those social skills, when it's fun, but also when it's really important, because everybody likes to win, that's when you model those really good social skills. And so, don't make it a teaching. The teaching will just happen. All you have to do is be enthusiastic and a good model. The other thing too is rotate. Switch it up. Don't do the same thing every day, because pretty soon, the fun thing is no fun anymore. So, switch it up a little bit. And the final thing I always like to do is anticipation. Everybody likes to anticipate something fun coming up, anticipate something different or new. And so, throw some things out there. If there's an ice cream shop that can follow the guidelines or things, put that on the schedule that, you know, Friday night, we still get to do a family activity or those kinds of things. Schedule it up. Anticipate. Some things that we have done is we've gone for ice cream and went to the park. We went on some walking on some trails. There are some things that you can follow the guidelines and still do and anticipate a picnic is a fantastic thing to do as well. But what's really important, and what will give balance to your life is the more we can implement those routines and schedules that were determined primarily by geography or places we could go or went every day, those are at the house, but we still want to kind of keep that schedule. It doesn't have to be perfect. It doesn't have to be a hundred percent. This is the best thing. You don't have to be great at doing this. You just have to put some energy and do pretty good. And it will benefit you and your family. Thank you.

Thank you, Blake. Now, I'm sure a lot of you are thinking that, it's easy, all these things are easier said than done. You just have to come to my house. So obviously, that's true. But I also would say that, you know, it's also important to just keep saying let me start where I can and let me do what I can and just keep saying those two words. Let me start at this place. If that means that while washing dishes, I have like 30 seconds to do some slow breathing, there you go. I'll use that. While waiting for the microwave to go off, I can do some slow breathing and say some positive affirmations, then you make that happen. If you can go out on a trail, but we can stand outdoors in the breeze and look at the sky, I would say take that. You know, even if you can't hit that number, because by the time you reach the second number that Maggie is saying, you have no energy for more positives, at least tell yourself, it's okay. It's a journey. Anyway, let me see if Maggie has any thoughts on what she said, or we said.

I just kind of wanted to add a little bit of what Dr. Desai and Blake said. Really give yourselves a break. This is so hard, and you know, especially if you're wearing that teacher hat as well. It might not be realistic that your kids are going to get every single assignment done. Maybe start with the goal that we're going to do one school activity today or one work sheet and the rest of the day is going to be fun activities and then you can slowly build on that. And recognizing where your child is. It might not be realistic to ask your particular – your kid to do three hours of homework and then be able to go out and play. You might have to be going back and forth, you know, one small activity that takes ten minutes, and then maybe even 30 minutes of something fun. And that's -- I think that's okay. Everyone just -- parents, you really need to give yourselves a break, because you're doing the best that you can.

Thanks, Maggie. And then, again, Dan, some of the things that come to my mind are, we are evolutionary programmed, our brain, our minds, our bodies, our souls, to sort of respond dramatically to being in nature. Normally stress hormones will come down. Some of our areas, which release chemicals like dopamine and other chemicals that make us feel happy go up. There's a lot of -- besides the obvious, you know, there's a lot of neurobiological reasons why we can somehow spend more time in nature. It doesn't have to be outdoors or trails. It could be flowers, garden. We have to be creative. And other thing that you mentioned was challenging things, and again, you know, from resilience point of view, we are biologically programmed to do better when we are doing something challenging. Then we feel good about ourselves, and that goodness stays much longer than the pleasure that I have of eating, you know, my wife's delicious meal. So again, when we do something that's challenging, the benefits last longer. Dan, any other thoughts come to your mind?

Just that. Some things that I would try maybe is just to create that normalcy. Individuals are seeing we're all in little bits and create that normalcy in your day. Do little scheduling. There are a lot of nice areas around. You could even -- just a short drive would be good, just to get outside, just to get some sun. There are little cultural things you can look at. Challenge yourself and think outside of the box a little bit. And I think you'll see some rewarding ramifications from that.

Dan, can you talk about bucket fishing more? I like it and to me, it's more like a symbol or example of things that one can do creative. So please.

Yeah. Bucket fishing was born from a client that really likes to be outside and likes to fish. Obviously, we couldn't go anywhere. But what I did is I got a bucket, and we just put a weight on it. It was a way for that individual to hone their skills. They were still outside and creating those memories and recalling those memories are being able to fish and honing that skill and creating that challenge where, you know, you can start with a swimming pool, a small kids' swimming pool and put some water in it. You see the splash. What I did is shrink it down. Pretty quick you have a five-gallon bucket and it becomes a little bit of a contest. There's challenge to it. There's the skill acquisition to it. There's memory recall. It was something that I found was extremely rewarding and extremely simple for this individual, which then turned around and created buy-in for everything else around. And so, bike riding and things they weren't doing all of a sudden they were doing, and you can do these from a social standpoint. So, you can teach them socialization skills, again, as Blake alluded to, with individuals, and you're laughing and having a good time. At the same time, you're learning a little bit about, maybe, falling short and working harder to then achieve. And so, you know, everyone will have their place there, and you may find that individuals start helping other individuals, you know, and if your kids are a little competitive, maybe the older child helps the younger child or the younger child is picking something up a little quicker, so it helps the older child. Build that camaraderie as well, I think. That's what I'm seeing with my populations.

Thanks, Dan. And Blake, any further thoughts?

Couldn't agree more with the ritual to me. It really adds predictability and that's a huge thing. They're all struggling to manage uncertainty. The only thing I would add is if you're a parent or responsible party or responsible person, in crisis work, our number one intervention is respite. And so make sure that you can grab a part of your day that is spent on you and spent on thinking about things that you want to think about, that you find enjoyable, and either through meditation or just 25 minutes reading or something like that, but you kind of have to do some self-care here before you can care for others. And if you don't do the self-care, you are going to burn out. You are going to have challenges, and so you have to schedule that self-care for yourself. Nobody else can do that for you. So, look at your resources. Look at you're married, and a spouse can [not audible] you off or something like that. The number one way to recharge your batteries is respite. You have to schedule that for yourself right now. I know that's a challenge and your respite is going to change a little bit by what you can and can't do. It may be 20 minutes in the room alone. But that's your oasis. That's where you recharge. And so, make sure you schedule that for yourself.

Okay. Christine, if you want me to talk about psychedelics or not today?

Well, I it four questions and I also want to encourage -- not psychedelics, Dr. Desai. I also want to encourage families who are on the webinar who may have questions to please use the chat box feature. For those of you who are using the conference number for our Spanish speakers, please use that number to ask questions of Sande to interpret to us, and also in the chat box feature, if you are a Spanish speaker, you can direct those questions to Sande, he will help us get those questions. We'd like to encourage all family members to ask any questions you might have. I do have four questions for the panelists at this time that I think all of you would have something to contribute to. The first question is what could I do to start my day off to help me feel more successful at supporting my kids throughout the day?

So, I'll go first. You know, to me, the first thing I would do in the morning, and again, we have to develop this habit, because it wasn't there definitely before COVID most likely is and we have to figure out a way so we don't even get out of the bed without doing this, is to smile and say hello as if you're talking to today as if it's a person. So, if you just do two things. Smile. Sad smile is okay. All right? But still smile. And say hello as if you were greeting today. I'll ask now Miss Maggie to give her thought.

I like that, Dr. Desai. I'm going to start doing that. I think you've heard a lot about structure and schedule and plan. I think one of the best things you can do to feel more successful is just have a little bit of a plan of what you want your day to look like and start with one small bowl of one thing you want to get accomplished that day, and that will make you feel more successful.

Dan.

I would say do something fun and active whenever you get up and start your day with that.

11:41:26 Don't start right in with the hard work or -- create that connection and get your body going. I think that helps a lot.

What about dancing with country music? Would that count?

Absolutely. I go out and feed my animals. Just that time of getting outside. I'll doing some physical exercise and feel like I accomplished something, as minimal as it is.

What if I do that and it's traumatic to my wife? [Laughter]

Well, then you'll have something to talk about it. It will create that connectedness, and maybe there's a great conversation that comes out of it.

Okay. Blake.

I like Dr. Desai's idea. I like to just take a moment and breathe and kind of put my head around what my day's going to look like, and then slowly start into it. Everybody will have their own way that rejuvenates, but I think the important part is to pause, think about it, and do your breathing and at that time, commitment to the day as far as, I'm going to commit to making this day what I can. And then the other thing is if you have a day off, that helps with the day on. And so, you know, kind ever -- of going back to that schedule. Make sure there's a day that you can lay and not do anything. If you can do that, that's helpful. That's that self-care.

Christine, I'm sure you have some of your own tricks.

I actually have been learning this from you, Dr. Desai. That is to start my morning by being grateful, and there's always something in our days to be grateful for. And to really focus on that and to really make an intention for my day. I think like Maggie said and like you said, Dr. Desai about today, my little goal or my victory -- what my day looks like in a good way is this and to have a plan. And I also think it's important to keep my expectations lower than they used to normally be before COVID-19. I don't set myself up to fail. I am not as productive technology-wise when I work at home, because my laptop doesn't work as well. I've had to learn to lower my expectations around what I'm actually able to do, because it's just not possible at this time to get everything I need out of my laptop to complete my work. So just lowering my expectations has been helpful in setting a plan for my day, and you know, just doing the best I can every day.

Just a quick thought on that expectation. I think that's really hard, because of our -- how we were raised and our culture, you know. So, I really would urge people to sort of replace expectations with aspirations. So, to me, instead of having expectation that I do this long list of things that just rattles out as soon as you open your eyes, you say all right. These are aspirations, not expectations. To me, those two are very different things.

All right. The next question that I have is how I do find ways to take a break during the day when I play the role 24/7 as educator and parent with all of my kids' meltdowns and curriculum that does not come modified. There's a whole lot packed into that question. But this is the experience of one parent that reached out to the council.

All right. So, I'm sure some of you are not going to like what I'm going to say. And somebody will maybe even throw up. But bear with me. I want you guys to go to the bathroom and spend a long time in the bathroom. And say that, you know, I'm busy. And then if you want to meditate. If you want to watch some social media, funny stuff. If you want to listen to music and dance. Anyway. Maggie. [Laughter]

I think you might be on to something. You know, we have these kinds of laundry list of things we feel like we need to be getting done. If we do have 5 or 10 minutes, because our kids are occupied watching TV, I think a lot of parents have the tendency to use that time to try to get something done, but I would argue that you maybe shouldn't. If there's something your kids can do independently for 5, 10, 15 minutes, do what Dr. Desai said and go in another room and do whatever it is that makes you feel happy and that's absolutely okay.

Dan.

Kind ever along the same lines. We have these lists and we have so much on our plates that we're thinking about having all of those roles that it's all right to look at your list and maybe push something off there and give yourself a break. I know there's a lot going on, and we have a lot of high expectations on ourselves, but during these sorts of times, we have to give ourselves that leeway to not be so productive and slow our life down a little bit. It's easy to go, go, go, with technology, and it's something that we just need to do. We do need to give ourselves a break as well.

Thanks. Blake.

The only thing I would think of is -- and this requires quite a bit of planning. I think it's important we all have independent play or alone-time play. And nobody's going to be good at it at first. And so I would make a goal or would think about instituting kind of -- okay, now we're going to have some -- this is time for Johnny to do the things that Johnny wants to do by himself, and we're going to do this for 2 or 3 minutes and just kind of expand on that. One is children will learn to do self-play, and often enjoy it. And it’s part of their development to be able to do that. And so, it's a good goal on both sides, but I would schedule that in my day. It's not going to be great for a while. But at some point in time, you can just go from one minute to 3 to 5, and the trick is to have some kind of novel activity for the child to do that they like to do and that they would do it anyway alone. And start with that. That way, you can kind of schedule in some play. But that self-play is a skill, and so you're going to have to kind of shape it and mold it. The other activity, and I want to throw this in that has nothing to do with the question, but in my neighborhood, people are putting Teddy bears in windows and families are walking around our neighborhood identifying the Teddy bears in everybody's windows, and frankly, I've seen a lot of Teddy bears all around town. I don't know if they're doing that everywhere. If you're whole neighborhood wants to get in on the gig, I have people just walking around my neighborhood identifying bears. I wanted to throw that out there. It's out there.

Very creative. Hey, quick question, Blake. What about not watching news its benefit to our psyche?

Well, just for Blake personally, he has been listening to a lot of music and a lot of different music, because I can't handle any more news. I can handle about half an hour, and it just kind of sets in this mood of doom if I watch too much news, but the music, I'm pretty content. So, you know, whatever your thing is, the news really, I think, should be pretty limited, because it can overwhelm your day.

So, the whole world is going to flames and Blake is listening to music. Got it.

Yeah. And I'm pretty happy with it. So...

Good for you. So, Miss Christine, your mission for the day is no more news today. Can you do it?

I'm good with that.

Oh, really?

I agree with Blake. It's all doom and gloom and it doesn't really change much day to day. It's pretty much the same message. So...

Are the well. What's next?

The next question came from an individual on the autism spectrum. And the question is how can I refocus on the positive when my routine is out the window, I am lonely and anxious?

That's, you know, obviously-- we say we are panelists and experts, but we struggle, and it's easier said than done in real life. But again, you know, this is what I tell myself, that I have two parts. One is the emotional part and one is the sort of common sense or wise part. And to me, it's the emotional part who is saying that, you know, the situation is hopeless. There is no solution. Nothing can be done about it. And then we have to somehow figure out a way to activate our wise part -- says that yes, this is very very hard. Let's create new routines and imagine this new routine will be somehow better than the previous routine, and then keep repeating the statements, because to me, the way Maggie says one negative event you need four positive experiences. Same thing in our mind if our emotional brain says one negative, you have to train some other part to figure out a way to say at least one, if not four positives. Anyway, Maggie. Help us out.

Well, I'll try. This is a struggle as Dr. Desai said, I think for all of us. The two things that come to my mind is, you know, one, trying to just pick something really small that you can accomplish and feel really good about and focus on that positive thing. The other thing, sometimes, this is kind of a mindfulness activity, I guess, that I'll do with teenagers and adults is I will -- and I even do it for myself. I will create a little list of 5 to 10 things that make me truly happy, and if I am just really struggling, because I'm feeling so overwhelmed or I'm feeling so down, I will just take a minute and I will close my eyes, and I will imagine and think about those 5 to 10 things, whether they're people or situations, that make me truly happy, and by the end of that minute or two, I am feeling a little bit better usually.

Dan. Any thoughts?

I would say what's been beneficial for me through this whole thing is figure out a way to distract ourselves with something new and challenging, something that you've been interested in and haven't had that time to do. You've been wanting to learn. Challenging yourself and learning something really revitalizes me. Instead of focusing on that status quo for the day or as you kind of alluded to with the news, we know what it's going to be, so let's learn and grow even while we're going through this period. I think we're going to learn a lot about ourselves. So yeah, the distraction of something new and challenging, which is going to be fun and at the same time a challenge.

All right. Blake.

I want to identify with the loneliness. I think it would be natural to feel lonely right now. And what I have been doing to address my personal loneliness is I've been calling my mom much more regularly. I've been calling my children more regularly, and I've scheduled visits with them where we could do 6-foot spacing, and so I have gotten to see my children, but from 6 feet away, and technology is your friend here, and then I have one of my friends who also is on the spectrum. She writes me letters back and forth, and texts back and forth actually, quite a bit. Honestly, that still is a connection for me, and I think it is for her. So, use your technology as much as possible, what you're comfortable with. But your friends are still there, and they're lonely too. Reach out. And so, you can help your friend as you help yourself just by reaching out. So, I strongly encourage that.

Yeah. Christine, we actually can expand that for a whole hour of how to figure out creative ways to connect and maintain connections and build new connections. Anyway, go ahead, Christine.

Well, Dr. Desai, you're up again next week, so we could explore that. The next question we have submitted, and again I want to encourage any questions from our audience, this last question is can you give us some fun activities that can be modified for our children with disabilities that I could implement throughout the day to do with my kids?

Dan provided a great example with the bucket fishing. I think families are looking for some things like that or some of the things that Maggie has mentioned, some activities to do that could be implemented simply throughout the day.

So, I'm going to use my prerogative to outsource the answer to Maggie and Dan.

Dan, why don't you go ahead and go first.

Well, some things that come to mind are again, just kind of like the bucket fishing. We have to think outside the box a little bit. Think back to our childhoods, and maybe some of the things that have gotten lost with technology, you know, mom and dad have some great things in our past that we have forgotten about because of video games. Some paper airplanes and hula hoops and create those social awareness’s as well. If you have some competitive individuals. So, think it's really important to think back to where we've come from or where we're going where it's easy to get lost with technology and use that. But that physical exercise and endorphin rush that comes from learning something new that maybe they haven't been exposed to. A bicycle course. Set up some cones. Do just a lot of different things outside of the box that maybe you have forgotten about.

Maggie.

I think Dan is absolutely right. And we rely so much on technology and video games. The only thing I would maybe add is so you could also get super creative with activities to do indoors. We're going into nice weather, so it's not very much of an issue now. You could do tons of stuff outdoors, but during the winter or fall or when it's rainy and we are stuck indoors, there's a lot of really fun activities you can do. I will tell you what. Google is your friend. Google, fun indoor activities for kids and a million things will pop up. You can do scavenger hunts in said that can be adapted to meet any child's needs. There are tons of games to do with balloons. Don't let the balloon hit the ground. There's paper dice, like activity dice that you can print and build and then, you know, that's a really fun game to play. You can do indoor bowling with plastic cups. You can create an indoor obstacle course. There are so many ways to, you know, come up with fun activities that can be modified indoors if you're stuck inside for some reason.

Blake, you have the final word.

I don't know.

Hi Christine.

Hi, Esther.

I always ask what people want to do, and then I always try to add something to it. So, I don't know that I am much help here. But I always ask people what they like to do, what is fun for you? What is fun for your kids? You are being a part of it will make it fun for them too.

We have a great comment come up through the chat box they wanted to share that I think is such an awesome idea. The comment is I wish we could -- this is from D.R., one of our council vice-chairs. She says I wish I could create letter sending correspondence with people in need and others like them. Those with mental or social disorders.

I think that's a great idea. Blake's example about deciding to call his mom and his kids more often. That could turn into I'm going to decide to write my aunt a letter, you know, or choose anybody to write a letter to, that's maybe feeling a little bit more isolated. D.R., I think that's a great idea.

Thank you for submitting that.

I got good news, Christine. My boy goes to his rooms and he calms down.

It's good to see you, Esther.

Tell everybody hi for me.

You are telling them yourself right now.

Hi, Esther.

So, Sande, are there any questions coming from your end that you want to share?

Sorry about that. I had to unmute myself. There have been no questions come in through the chat. And then I think it's just Miguel and I on the actual telephone conference call. So, we haven't had anybody on that end either.

Thank you, Sande.

You're welcome.

So, do you have any final comments, panelists you want to share with our audience members?

I think it's best to end with what Dan and Maggie said. There are so many creative ideas, and what D.R. said.

Thank you, Dr. Desai. So, at this time, I just want to remind you that we have a webinar scheduled for next Friday from 1:00 to 2:00 mountain time that will feature Dr. Desai and this is managing stress part two. You might remember some of you who were part of our webinar with Dr. Desai a few weeks ago. He did a managing stress part one. We'll be having that next Friday, and then the following Friday, we have another webinar featuring coping strategies for families. So, part two of today's webinar. I'd like to encourage you to please fill out the evaluation that you received from us. We have a lot of good ideas from you about what you might want to be learning about. We also learn how to do these a little bit better, and that feedback is really important to us. So, we really appreciate you taking the time to fill those out. I want to thank all of our presenters, Dan, Maggie, Dr. Desai, and Blake. Thank you so much for being with us today. All of your information and your wisdom, I think, was really beneficial today. I know it helped me a lot in thinking about how I do my day differently, and I want to thank you for your time and your expertise. I also want to thank Sande and Miguel for being our excellent Spanish interpreters today. And also, to thank Lisa for doing our closed captioning. Thank you so much. We have added that as an additional to provide accommodation for individuals today. And thank you all for our audience members. We appreciate you following along, and please let us know what needs you might v we don't have to stick to COVID-19. We can think about providing some additional topics. You just need to let us know what it is you might need, and we're happy to put that together for you to try to meet people's needs today. From the council, from all ever us here at council, we send you love and positive thoughts. And good health, and we look forward to seeing you next week. Have a great weekend, everybody. Have a great weekend. Stay safe.

Thank you.

Good health.

Thank you, everybody.

 Good-bye, Esther.