



WEBINAR SERIES

MENTAL HEALTH *and* CARE

COPING WITH STRESS DURING THIS SEASON AND BEYOND

presented by  AMPLIFY MEDIA

Episode 2 – Relationships in a Pandemic: Building Resiliency During Unique Challenges

Watch this episode on demand [here](#).

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Host

Rev. Justin Coleman, Senior Pastor, University United Methodist Church, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Panelists

- Donald H. Baucom, Ph.D., Richard Lee Simpson Distinguished Professor of Psychology, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- Liuan Huska, Author and Speaker, Chicago, Illinois
- Dr. Greta Smith, Author and Psychologist, Knoxville, Tennessee

If you are suffering from mental health concerns, contact your doctor or other health professional.

These hotlines are also available:

The National Alliance on Mental Health Helpline ⇨ (800) 950-6264

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline ⇨ (800) 273-8255

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Helpline ⇨ (800) 662-4357

National Domestic Violence Hotline ⇨ (800) 799-7233

Episode Recap

Stress affects not just ourselves but the people we're in relationships with such as spouses, friends, children, neighbors, coworkers, and other family. When someone needs support, you usually can separate what's needed into two categories – practical and emotional. Given our range of individual experiences and stressors, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution for improving your relationships. If you don't know what someone needs, ask.

We are born to reach out and bond with people, but as we age, it becomes harder to show vulnerability, which is why some people withdraw when they are under stress.

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When you are stressed, good communication becomes even more important. Not only asking what other people need but also directly telling people what you need.

Because our typical supports are not available during this time of physical distancing, it's important to give people the benefit of the doubt and show one another grace.

Because we are at home more, one of the panelists shared that it's like living in the movie Groundhog Day, where everyday is the same. It's easy in those situations to stop seeing each other. You must be intentional about creating new rhythms for connection.

When communicating, check in with others about their intent. When you feel stressed, it's easy to make assumptions about people's intentions and take things personally. As Brene Brown says, "what are the stories I'm telling myself?"

Another tactic for relieving a tense conversation is to simply say, "Can we start over?"

There is a pervasive sense of loss this year. Try to differentiate between the absence of positive things and the presence of negative things. When you can, intentionally build in positive things to your daily life.

Children are as stressed as adults, and they look to adults for how they should respond to situations. Both children and adults need space for both pleasure and grief. Create ways to play with your children. Likewise, don't minimize or dismiss their feelings of grief. ("Everything will be okay.") Both Liuan and Greta recommended [How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk](#).

Churches are in a great position to help individuals and families connect. They should continue the practices with using tech for connection even once the pandemic is over.

When having difficult conversations over cultural differences, it's important to take the conversation off-line. Social media promotes statements rather than curious questions about where a person is coming from. It's good to set boundaries for yourself with people. (For example, decide you will leave the room if certain topics are brought up in certain ways.) This time of cultural division is an invitation to see these fault lines as an opportunity for deep listening.