

YOUR HEALTH

MATTERS



LACERS Well Newsletter | Winter 2021

A photograph of an older couple standing on a beach. The woman is on the left, wearing a yellow sweater and white pants, with a white jacket draped over her shoulders. The man is on the right, wearing a blue sweater and khaki pants. They are both smiling and embracing each other. The background shows a beach with waves and a hazy sky.

Social & Community Well-Being

There is something about having close friendships in general that is good for our physiological health. Relationships serve as a buffer during tough times, which in turn improves our cardiovascular functioning and decreases stress levels. As scientists continue to explore the connection between our relationships and our health, they are discovering that our Social Well-being might have even more influence on how quickly we recover from illness than conventional methods.

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Pandemics

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a new disease and what could happen can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Public health actions, such as social distancing, are necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but can make people feel isolated and lonely, and increase stress and anxiety. Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can sometimes cause the following:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones, your financial situation or job, or loss of support services you rely on
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Worsening of mental health conditions
- Increased use of tobacco, and/or alcohol or other substances

Coping with stress in a healthy way will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger. However, if you find you are not coping well, below are resources to get immediate help in a crisis:

- Call **911**
- Disaster Distress Helpline: CALL or TEXT **1-800-985-5990** (press 2 for Spanish)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** for English, **1-888-628-9454** for Spanish, or Lifeline Crisis Chat at suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/
- The Eldercare Locator: **1-800-677-1116**

Can Be Stressful

Healthy ways to cope with stress:

- Know what to do if you are sick and are concerned about COVID-19. Contact a health professional before you start any self-treatment for COVID-19.
- Know where and how to get treatment and other support services and resources, including counseling or therapy (in person or through telehealth services).
- Take care of your emotional health. Taking care of your emotional health will help you think clearly and react to any urgent need to protect yourself and your family.
- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including those on social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body:
 - Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate;
 - Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals;
 - Exercise regularly;
 - Get plenty of sleep;
 - Avoid excessive alcohol and drug use.
- Make time to unwind. Try to participate in activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- Connect with your community- or faith-based organizations. While social distancing measures are in place, consider connecting online, through social media, or by phone or mail.

Volunteer Opportunities



BECOME A CHAMPION!

We are looking for individuals to join our awesome Champion team to plan, facilitate, and report upon fun virtual and in-person (when it is safe to do so) activities that support physical and emotional well-being for our retirees. To apply or to find out more, visit lacers.org/champions and complete the online form under register here to learn more about becoming a LACERS Well Champion.

JOIN OUR PHONE BANK!

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are concerned that some LACERS Members may feel isolated and need assistance, but don't know where to turn. We are calling other LACERS Members to check in with them and, if needed, inform them about available resources and most importantly, to hear from a friendly voice to bring them comfort and reassurance. Those participating have found this effort very rewarding. Send an email to LACERSWell@lacers.org to learn more.





Three Ways To Help Your Community During The Pandemic

There are many ways for you to help individuals and communities during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Donate to nonprofits helping to respond to COVID-19—and your other favorite causes as well.

The problem: COVID-19 is creating new needs, while putting enormous financial pressure on all nonprofits. From medical and public health needs related to the response to economic uncertainty impacting vulnerable populations, the COVID-19 pandemic is creating unmet needs above and beyond the usual.

What you can do: If you are in a financial position to do so, you should consider making a donation to directly help combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit [fidelitycharitable.org](https://www.fidelitycharitable.org) or [mayorsfundla.org/](https://www.mayorsfundla.org/) to find out how donors can give to make a difference during this crisis.

2. Volunteer for organizations that are providing critical services in your community.

The problem: Nonprofits depend on volunteer resources in delivering critical services. At the same time, needs are continuing to rise as COVID-19 spreads—for example, demand has increased for food pantries and other services, also increasing the need for volunteers to support the deliveries.

What you can do: Reach out to local charities and ask how

you can best support them with your time, keeping safety in mind. You can also search online for volunteer opportunities you can do safely from home in support of a nonprofit's mission.

3. Your voice is powerful—use it to advocate for the individuals and organizations that need help.

The problem: People are worried, but not sure what they can do as individuals to help.

What you can do: Share information with your friends and network on social media, in conversations about how you are coping during this time, and via email. Be a voice for how people can help each other in this time of social distancing, while staying safe.

More Activities & Events Coming Your Way in 2021

This year's LACERS *Well* program continues to build upon the five influences of well-being: purpose, social engagement, finances, health and community. In response to the stress, the loss of connection and the overwhelming resource needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the LACERS *Well* and Champion teams have planned activities and events to focus on social connectivity, community engagement and mental health

awareness. Visit [lacers.org/lacers-well-events](https://www.lacers.org/lacers-well-events) to check out upcoming LACERS *Well* events and activities to keep you connected with your LACERS family, engage with your community, and take care of yourself.

February/March 2021 Events and Activities

- Kaiser Well-being Webinars: Emotional Well-being; Cultivating Mindfulness; Managing Stress

- Social Engagement Celebration - Valentine's Day
- Technology Events hosted by Mom's Computer
- Champion-led Virtual Activities: Book Club; Movie Review Club; Hula Classes
- Aging Mastery Program (AMP)
- Coronavirus-Vaccine Update

Please note, these events and activities are subject to change based on availability.



Social & Community Well-Being *(continued)*

Because your entire social network affects your health, habits, and wellbeing, mutual friendships matter. Investing in mutual relationships will lead to higher levels of well-being. That is why it is critical for us to do what we can to strengthen our entire network. Simply put, we have stock in others' well-being.

During the coronavirus pandemic the use of video technology; such as Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime, has become the most popular platforms to connect with colleagues, family and friends. If you aren't familiar with video chatting, you can view a Zoom tutorial or written instructions by placing the key words, "senior planet zoom" in a Google search. For more personal assistance, you may contact Mom's Computer, a company who has provided LACERS Members tech helpdesk assistance at several past LACERS events, at **(800) 281-0692** or via email at help@momscomputer.com. There is no charge to the

Member for this service. LACERS has many opportunities to connect with others and engage in activities virtually (or by phone). See the LACERS *Well* Volunteer Opportunities article for more information.

At the highest end of the Community Well-being continuum is giving back to society. People with a thriving well-being mentioned the impact they have had on another person, group, or community is the greatest contribution they had made in their life. We often get a sense of joy from giving a meaningful gift to a loved one, but perhaps no gift is as valuable as our time. This might explain why some volunteers get a "helper's high" - they feel stronger, more energetic, and more motivated after helping others even in the smallest ways. Becoming a LACERS *Well* Champion is a great way to contribute to your LACERS community while also reaping the

volunteer benefits. Throughout the course of our lives, well-doing promotes deeper social interaction, enhanced meaning and purpose, and a more active lifestyle, while keeping us from being too preoccupied with ourselves or getting into harmful emotional stress. Several studies have shown a link between selfless behavior and increases in overall longevity, and researchers have speculated that this might be due in part to how well-doing vaccinates us against stress and negative emotions.

To find out more on how to become a LACERS *Well* Champion, visit lacers.org/champions and complete the online form under register here. You may also visit lacers.org/lacers-well-events to register for upcoming LACERS *Well* events and activities to keep you connected with your LACERS family, engage with your community, and take care of yourself.



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Activities & Events Coming Your Way in 2021!

CARRIER HIGHLIGHTS



According to the National Institute of Mental Health, nearly 1 in 5 American adults are dealing with a mental health issue. There are times when all of us may feel overwhelmed, sad or anxious. Family concerns, pandemic stress and even social issues can impact our health.

There is hope if you or a loved one are dealing with stress, depression or addiction. Whether you're seeking support for everyday challenges or more long-term concerns, we are here to help.

To get started, UHC members may call the number on your health plan ID card to speak with an advocate and learn more about behavioral health programs that may be available to you. The advocate can also help you find a local network provider or a virtual provider that can provide remote behavioral health support.

UHC members may also call **(855) 780-5955** to access our 24/7, free and confidential Substance Use Disorder Helpline. In an emergency, call **911** or get to an emergency room as soon as possible.

