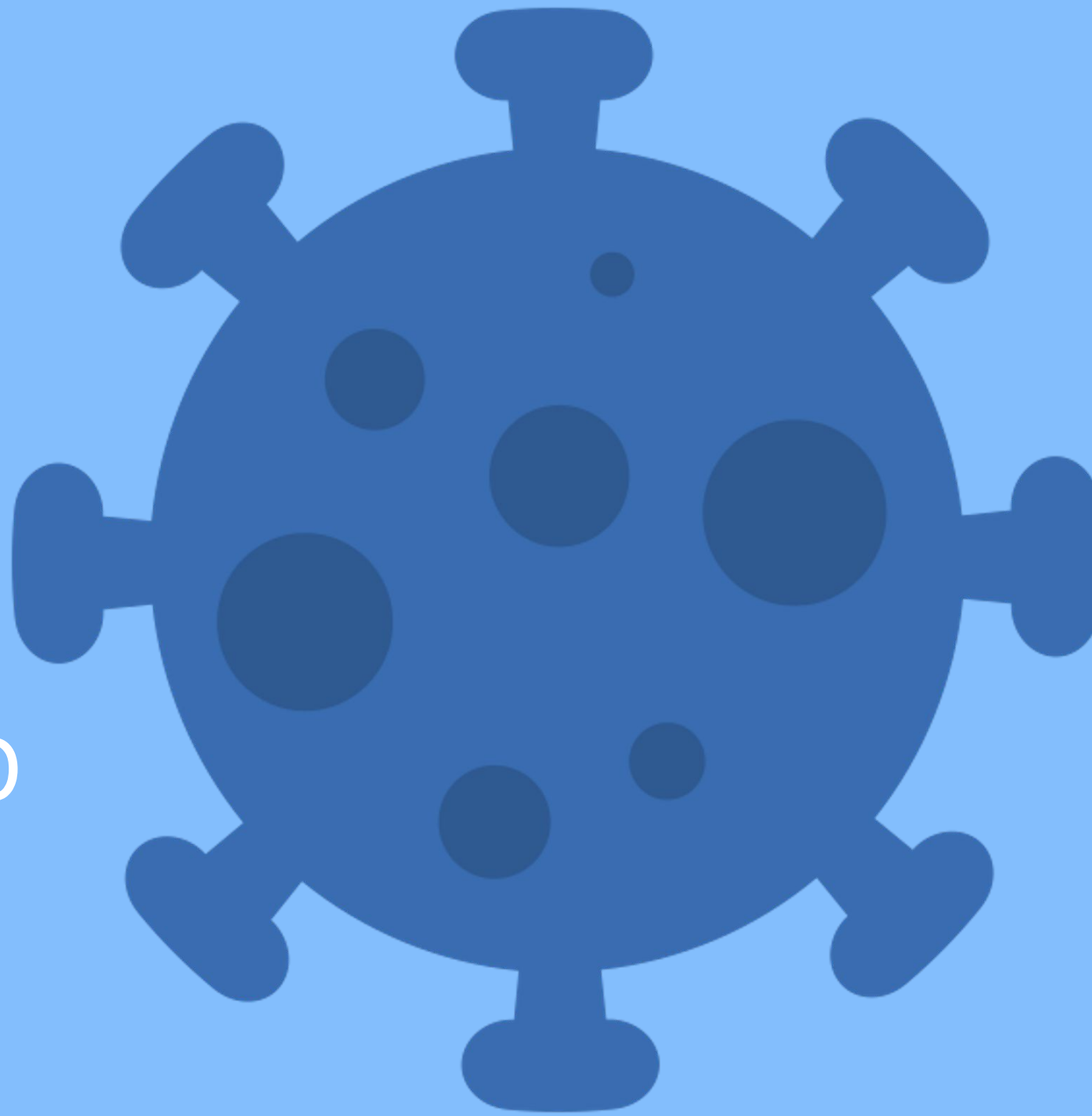


# COVID PANDEMIC FATIGUE & CHD

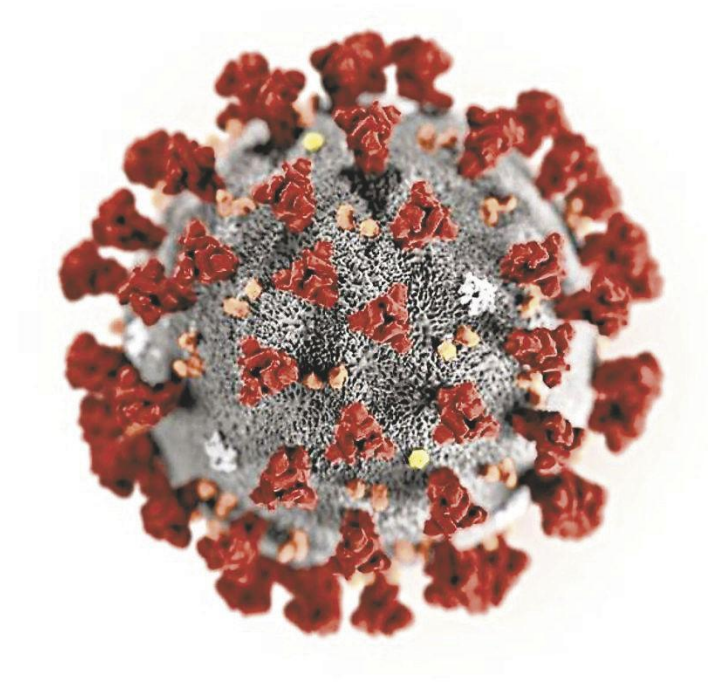
**MAKE IT STOP!- WAYS TO COPE**

David Highfill, LCSW



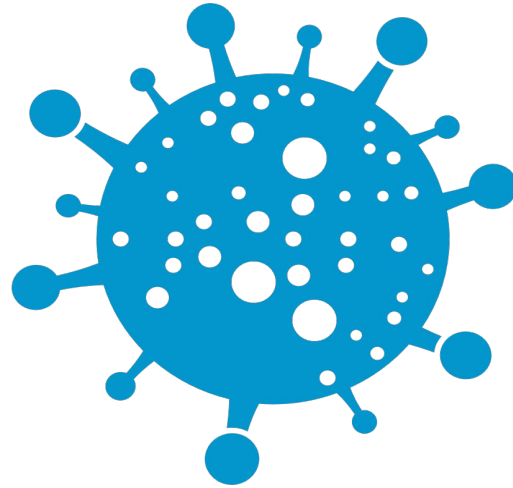
# OVERVIEW

- The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) defines pandemic fatigue as being “demotivated” and exhausted with the demands of life during the COVID crisis.
- The WHO warns that this fatigue could ultimately lead to a longer, more devastating pandemic.
- FACT: Pandemic fatigue is *completely natural*.



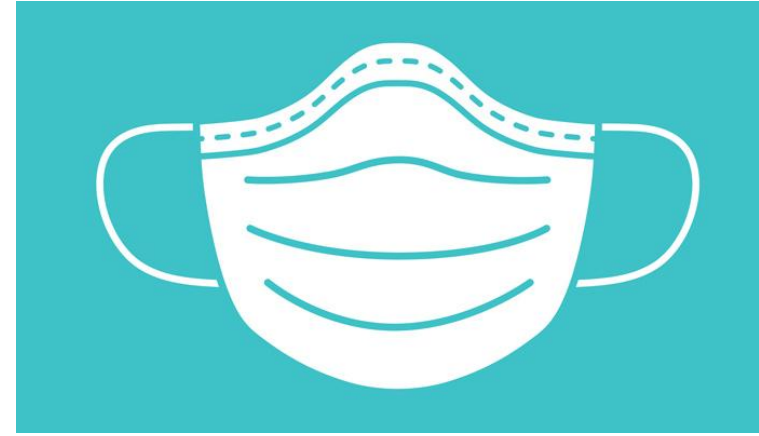
# OVERVIEW

- After nearly two years, many are feeling exhausted, anxious or sad
- People with CHD live with generally higher levels of anxiety, depression and PTSD
- Many CHD patients have worried that COVID-19 will have devastating consequences due to their cardiac condition
- These concerns have led many patients living with CHD to experience a wide range of emotional issues
  - Fear
  - Heightened Anxiety
  - Feelings of Depression
  - Grief and Loss
  - PTSD



# OVERVIEW

- Initial strategies
  - Heightened sense of alert
  - Isolated and followed precautions
    - Practice until 2<sup>nd</sup> nature
    - Similar to wearing your seatbelt, helmet, taking your meds
  - Found ways to cope
- Now, after nearly two years many have had enough!



# OVERVIEW

- Emotional issues
  - Grief & Loss
  - Anxiety & Depression
  - PTSD
- COPING STRATEGIES
  - Activities
  - Remaining Vigilant about safety



# PARTS/STAGES OF GRIEF & LOSS

## Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

- Adjusting to loss through a pattern of adjustment
  - **Denial** Many facets of this through personal and public actions and events through the pandemic
  - **Anger** At the pandemic, at others who do not behave the way we want them to
  - **Bargaining** Working to find a reason for the loss
  - **Depression** Emotional impact of the loss
  - **Acceptance** Gaining a sense of closure
- Stages are not sequential and have no necessary order or duration

# IMPACT OF GRIEF & LOSS

## Medical

- Impact to individuals and families on multiple levels
  - Changing ability to visit patients in hospitals
  - Patients with no family or other visitors
  - Concerns about appearing for appointments
  - Impact and risk for our healthcare providers
  - Death of a loved one
  - Inability to conduct regular end of life services
  - Family impact by loss during a pandemic

## Personal & Social

- Loss of routine and identity
  - Job loss
  - Social activities
  - Inability to visit friends & relatives
  - Work and school from home
  - Childcare loss, issues and challenges
  - Inability to perform usual basic needs
    - Grocery shopping
    - Car repair

# ANXIETY & DEPRESSION

## Prevalence

- Experiencing intense emotions nearly everyday drains energy
- 35-40% of people in the US experiencing symptoms
  - About 25% of population pre-pandemic
- **Anxiety, Depression and Fatigue** are main issues
- Uncertainty and lack of control contribute to Anxiety
- Loss and uncertainty also contributes to Depression and feelings of helplessness
- Ever-changing multiple demands contribute to Fatigue
  - School and work from home
  - Employment uncertainty
  - Multiple variant concerns and regulations
  - Safety concerns for self and others



# PTSD (POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER)

Intense disturbing thoughts and feelings related to a person's experience of a traumatic event

## General symptoms and characteristics

- Last at least one month
- Impact or interfere with usual life events
- Direct or indirectly witnessing and repeated exposure to the event
- Caused death to someone close
- Upsetting memories of the event
- Nightmares and or flashbacks
- Physiological reactions when reminded of the event
- Avoidance of people or places that are reminders
- Negative changes to mood or thoughts after the event including
  - Pervasive negative emotional state
  - Loss of interest in activities
  - Feel detached from others
  - Inability feel joy or happiness
- Changes in sensitivity
  - Feeling on edge
  - Difficulty concentrating
  - Irritable or aggressive
  - Sleeping problems

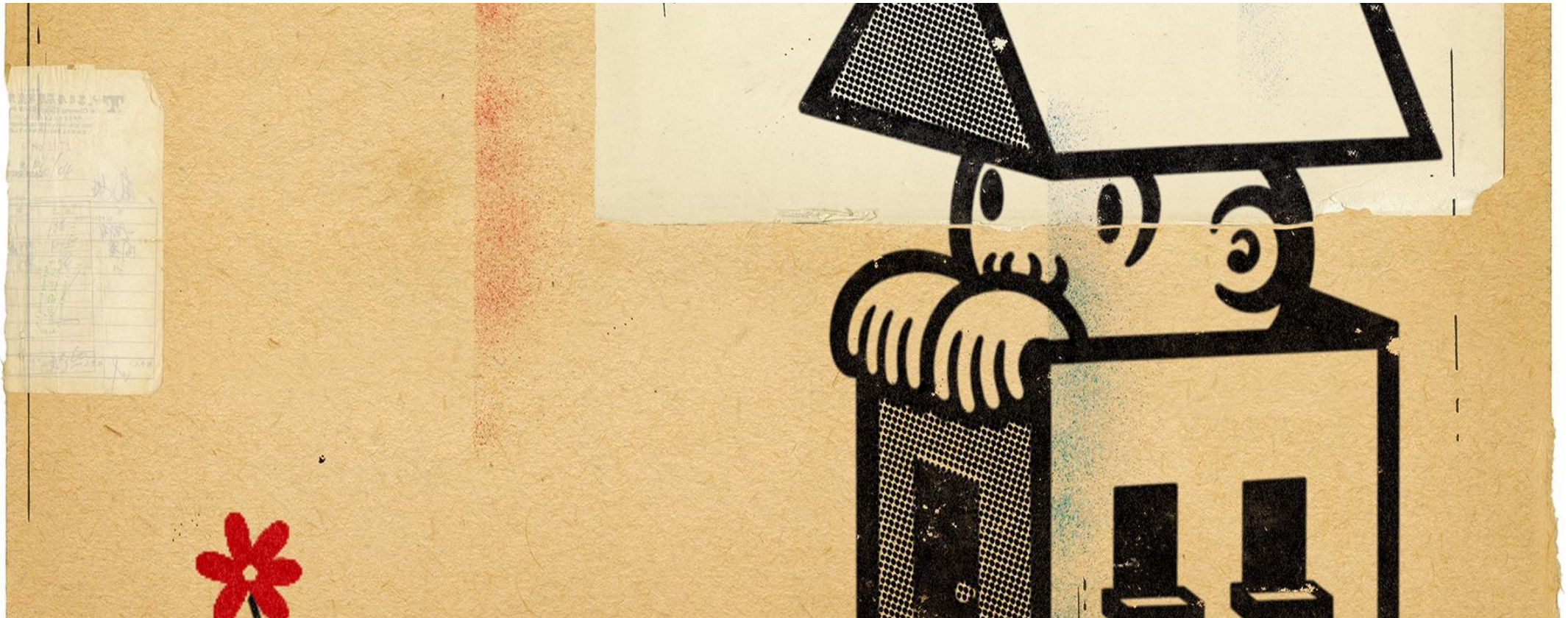
# SOCIAL DISTANCE NOT SOCIAL ISOLATION

STAYING CONNECTED



# ACTIVITIES

**Ways to stay active and engaged**





# STAY SOCIAL

- Important to maintain social contacts and support
- Schedule regular get togethers with other vaccinated friends & family
  - Outdoors
  - Masked when not eating/drinking
- Zoom, Teams, VR meetings with others
- Motivational & Supportive videos, podcasts, books or tape
- Book clubs



# MINIMIZE ISOLATION & BOREDOM

## Living alone

- Minimize loneliness
- Utilize vaccines and testing for visiting others
- Arrange outdoor gatherings with small numbers
- Multiple VR games, chatrooms,
- Stay active
  - Get outdoors!
  - Daily walk, bike ride
  - Gym if safe/comfortable
  - Home gym, resistance bands, stationary bike

## Living with others

- Car picnics
- Reimagine your space at home to use for games and physical activities
- Go on a picnic at a park with people in your household or vaccinated friends at a safe distance from others
- Go for a drive by yourself to have personal time
- Alternate exercise and activities together & alone

# MINIMIZE ISOLATION & BOREDOM

## Families with teenagers

- Remind of benefits of precautions and risks to all in household
- Host friend gatherings (outdoors, vaccinated)
- Allow time for games, gaming, friend chat/facetime
- Encourage outdoor activities for exercise
- Monitor if stress is affecting their health or behavior
- Listen to your teen
- Model stress management skills

## Families with little ones

- Establish a regular routine/schedule at home
- Give choices
  - Let them choose mask colors
- Get kids involved in all forms of safety practices
  - Seatbelts, masks, wash hands
- Keep kids active
  - Family walks to a nearby park
- Alternate exercise and activities together & alone
  - Space for kids & grown ups is important
- Go for a drive by yourself to have personal time

# COPING RESOURCES

## Patient Recommendations

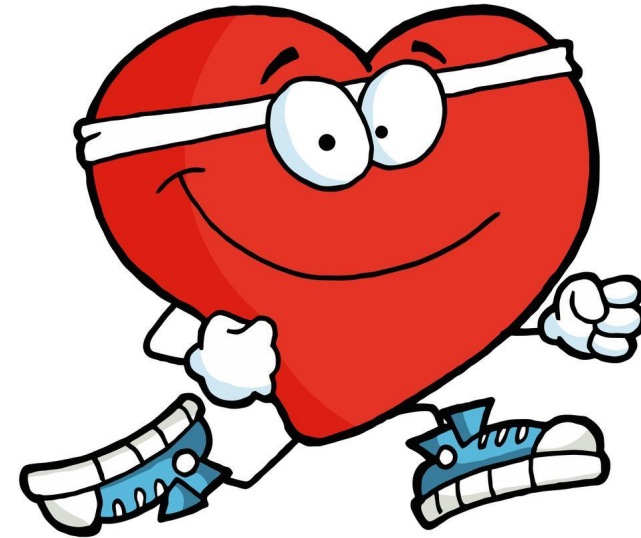
- ACHAheart.org for webinars and information
- UCLA Connections Meetings and other groups for peer support
- Patient blog:  
<https://unspokendiagnosis.medium.com/when-breathe-may-become-air-24f4b3efcc2>
- Games site: <https://buddyboardgames.com/>
- Consider Counseling Services:
  - Talk with your ACHD social worker or Cardiologist
  - Psychologytoday.com
  - FindATherapist.com
  - GoodTherapy.org
  - TalkSpace.com



# ACTIVITY RESOURCES

## Stress Management

- Yoga, simple yoga, chair yoga
- Breathe, Meditate
  - Relaxation techniques
  - Abdominal breathing, muscle relaxation
- Motivational/Support videos, talks, podcasts
  - Carl Sagan
  - Alan Watts – Is there a purpose to life





# VACCINES WORK

- ✓ Two doses plus booster 4-6 months after 2<sup>nd</sup> dose
- ✓ Immunocompromised/Transplant persons 3 doses plus booster 4-6 months after 3<sup>rd</sup> dose
- ✓ Guidance for children under 5 coming soon



# FACTS & SUPPORT

## Resources

- LA County COVID Data: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/coronavirus/data/>
- Orange County COVID Info: <https://occcovid19.ochealthinfo.com/coronavirus-in-oc>
- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/>
- CalOSHA COVID: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/>
- UCLA COVID Info: <https://covid-19.ucla.edu/>
- Adult Congenital Heart Disease COVID: <https://www.achaheart.org/your-heart/educational-qas/living-with-chd/covid-19-and-achd/>
- Helping Kids & Parents Cope with COVID: [Resources for Helping Kids and Parents Cope Amidst COVID-19 \(aacap.org\)](#)
- Childcare, Research and Advocacy: Coronavirus and Mental Health podcast-[Coronavirus and Mental Health: Joshua D. Feder, M.D.: Child & Family Psychiatry \(joshuafedermd.com\)](#)
- Stress Management and Teens: [Stress Management and Teens \(aacap.org\)](#)
- Coronavirus Clear Answers for kids: [517d15\\_915f31f39df449a2837c11862a7ab39c.pdf](#)