



Pandemic fatigue: We're in this alone, together

The Covid crisis especially hard on children and teens

The Covid-19 pandemic has upended work and learning, relationships and routines, with no end in sight.

The crisis has been especially disruptive for children and teens, whose mental health needs have soared as the virus has raged on. Mental health-related emergency department visits for children ages 12 to 17 increased more than 30 percent nationwide between January and October 2020, [according to the Centers for Disease Control.](#)



Thrive Counseling Center has responded to the surge in mental health needs with increased therapy access for youths, and a free check-in phone line for anyone struggling with pandemic stress and anxiety. The check-in line is funded in part by Women Leaders in Philanthropy, a women-led giving initiative by the Community Foundation of Oak Park River Forest. Community members can call 708-383-7500 ext. 8 to talk to a therapist or leave a message that will be answered within the next business day.

"Everything is more stressful because of the pandemic," said Daisy Rios, LCPC, Thrive's manager of youth services. "Youth and adolescents are in critical developmental ages, and they are still learning skills that are solidified for adults. It is important in therapy to work with youth and family, so that parents understand what is going on for their child."

Now, as local public schools begin to open up, children, educators and parents must adjust to hybrid, home, or in-person learning.

"People are having to manage with limited resources and information," Rios said. "Single parents have to work from home while helping to teach their children. Parents and teachers are worried about the risks of going back to school. No one is sure what to expect."

Parents must weigh the relative risk of Covid exposure against something--perhaps time with a friend--that could benefit a child who feels isolated. Students may feel torn between seeing classmates and pleasing parents in decisions about whether to return to in-person learning or stay at home. Parent support can help youths build resilience as they face pandemic choices.

Thrive counselors advise clients of all ages to control what they can.

"For those who enjoy writing, I suggest journaling," said Angie Pill, LCSW, CADC. "Others like to go

outside for a walk, no matter how cold it is.”

“Do one thing different,” suggests Elaine Phillips, LPC. “Rearrange your furniture to create a different vibe. I also suggest funny and creative adult coloring books that can be ordered online or picked-up curbside. These are simple projects with a therapeutic aspect.”

Thrive offers strategies for Aging Fearlessly



Growing older impacts how we view ourselves, our expectations, and our relationships. Aging carries greater burdens of unpredictability than other developmental stages.

Marcia Spira, PhD., Professor Emeritus at the Loyola University School of Social Work, will offer strategies for Aging Fearlessly at a Thrive TALK from 7:30-8:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 11. Dr. Spira, an author of books and articles on the challenges of aging, will discuss

opportunities for growth as well as common anxieties and concerns.

Dr. Spira also will address the impact of the pandemic on older people, who may be especially isolated and at risk for serious Covid-19 illness. The presentation will be offered via this [Zoom link](#)

Thrive Talks, featuring experts on a variety of issues related to healthy relationships, parenting, and well-being, are free and open to everyone via Zoom links. To view this Thrive talk or other past talks, click on this [link](#).

A virtual place where siblings feel special



Sibshops, a therapeutic program designed to make siblings of children with special needs feel special, runs through May 15 via Zoom.

The program, offered in partnership with River Forest Township, creates a nurturing space for siblings. The Community Mental Health Board

of Oak Park Township also provides Sibshop funding.

Thrive therapists lead age-appropriate breakouts which generate conversation and ideas. Sibshops serves children in grades 1-7 on Saturdays from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., through May 15. The cost is \$5 per session or \$35 for eight sessions. Need-based scholarships are available.

To register or learn more, call Laurie Johnson at 708-383-7500, ext. 409, or email ljohnson@thrivecc.org. A Zoom link will be provided upon registration.

News you can use

Self-care isn't selfish. Caring for yourself during extended periods of stress helps your family too! From the New York Times. Click [here](#)

Help your kids navigate scary news. Every time you turn the television on, the real world bursts in with images that can frighten adults, let alone children. Strategies to help your child feel safe, from PBS. Click [here](#)

To start a healthy new habit, make it easy. The New York Times offers tips to make healthy lifestyle changes, permanently. Click [here](#)

**Thrive is THE Oak Park and River Forest
Community Mental Health Center**

Your gift to Thrive helps ensure that the support of a mental health professional is within reach of all members of our community.

Please make a gift today

Thrive Counseling Center offers crisis intervention, psychiatric treatment, individual and group therapy, and an array of wellness programs. Thrive is located at 120 S. Marion St., Oak Park IL, 60302

Contact Thrive at 708-383-7500 or visit www.thrivecc.org

