

CHANA Serves Survivors of Abuse

BY BARBARA KORENBLIT, LCSW

I work for CHANA, the Jewish response to abuse and trauma. CHANA serves people in the Jewish community and beyond who have been impacted by domestic violence, sexual abuse, or elder abuse. Within CHANA, I work for SAFE: Stop Abuse of Elders—a program that helps older abuse victims. My role includes direct services to individuals as well as outreach and education on elder abuse to seniors, professionals, and the general public.



Our entire team is now working from home. Although we no longer see clients in our office or do home visits, we continue to provide crisis intervention, safety planning, supportive counseling, resource linkage, access to therapy, legal advocacy, and access to legal services through our partnership with Maryland Legal Aid. We collaborate with our colleagues almost constantly, coming up with creative ways to meet our clients' complex needs. We answer forwarded phone lines from our dedicated cell phones and follow up with new and ongoing clients.

The stay-at-home order has intensified the stress for many families and heightened the risk of abuse. For many clients (prior to the order) the opportunity for them or their partners to go to work, school, or on errands allowed victims a chance to get

away from their abusers, talk with supportive loved ones, or take care of themselves. These breaks also allowed them a safe opportunity to contact CHANA without their partner being aware. Now, with abusers and victims together 24/7 (often with the added pressure of job loss and children to care for), tensions are high and there are few avenues to get help if an abuser escalates.

For some older clients the greatest risk is increased isolation. Many of them live alone and have far less contact with supportive loved ones than they did before. Many are struggling to figure out how to safely get food and medications. Our staff provides resources and linkage to programs that can help. Another danger is the increase in scams related to Covid-19 (fake cures, schemes asking for money to help seniors get their stimulus check, etc.). We educate and guide them to reliable sources of information and warn them about the current fraud schemes.

When We Reach the New Normal

BY JENNIFER L. FITZPATRICK, MSW, LCSW-C, CSP

There have been many times over the past decade when I wished the world would stop. Just for a few days. Just so I could catch up. Just so I could take a moment for myself—watch Law & Order SVU marathons, spend time with my husband, stop traveling. Just *be*. The weekends never seemed long enough. Though I love my work, I often craved some sabbatical or retreat time. Sadly, because of this healthcare crisis, the world *did* abruptly come to a screeching halt last month, and my wish for unlimited time at home came true.

Having come from a long line of worriers, I have had my “freak out” moments during this period of social distancing. At the same time, I have tried to embrace the gift of being more in the moment. As an entrepreneur, I have always been future-focused; trying to second guess tomorrow. Now I find myself considering how to make *today* better for myself and others.

I pray and meditate more. Coordinating and hosting Zoom gatherings for groups of loved ones who wouldn't get to ‘see’ each other frequently has become an almost daily occurrence. Each week, my husband and I choose a small gesture to demonstrate our profound appreciation for essential workers. We express gratitude that those we know who have been impacted by the virus are among the 97-98% who are recovering, and we take time to appreciate that we and the majority of our family and friends are healthy and safe.

This situation is temporary. There are moments when it feels like this stay at home order is forever, but it will eventually end. Soon enough we will all be back

to a *new normal*. My wish for everyone is that we focus on how we want to feel when we join the *new normal* and live our more simplified lives now, accordingly. Maybe you want to enter the *new normal* having learned a new language. Maybe you will use this time to train for a marathon. Maybe you will check off all those house projects you've been putting off for years.

It might be better if your goals for this time are a little less lofty. Perhaps you simply want to look back on this crazy time in history remembering that while home-schooling was no picnic, you taught your kids how to play Monopoly. Will your memories be that you reconnected with dear friends you hadn't had a meaningful conversation with in years? That you stopped resenting that your dog needed to be walked in lousy weather since you were so excited for any excuse to go outside?

Feeling stressed out and frightened during this uncertain time is normal, but if we spend every moment counting down the days until school and work reopens, toilet paper is plentiful, and parties are allowed, we are missing out. I have a feeling a lot of us are going to look back on some aspects of this time longingly once we get to the *new normal*.

Jennifer L. FitzPatrick, MSW, LCSW-C, CSP (Certified Speaking Professional) is the author of Cruising Through Caregiving: Reducing The Stress of Caring For Your Loved One, the founder of the continuing education consulting firm Generations Health Education, Inc. and an instructor at Johns Hopkins University's Certificate on Aging program. You can reach her at www.generationshealth.com.

VOTING is Social Work

SLATE FOR 2020 NASW Maryland Chapter Election

For more information on the candidates, please visit our webpage www.nasw-md.org

The election will be held in mid-May via electronic voting

Recording Secretary: Katie Green

Southern Maryland Representative: Jennifer Novak

Western Maryland Representative: Elisabeth McCall Martin

Suburban Maryland Representative: Stacey Atkins, Shannon Jordan

Eastern Shore Representative: David Levert

Metro Baltimore Representative: Sharlene Allen-Milton, Emilia Petrillo, Jon Reidy

New Professional (at-large): Philip Pratt

Graduate Student Representative: Danielle Misterka, Erica Mollet

Undergraduate Student Representative: Lukas Kassa

Walk to Fight Suicide in Maryland



Register at:
afsp.org/Maryland



American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

