



Follow-Up Summary and Resources for Mental Health in the Time of COVID

This past year has been one of the most challenging in memory, leading to a dramatic increase in mental health issues and substance use. On March 24, 2021, the Brookline Department of Public Health and the Brookline Center for Community Mental Health presented a zoom forum moderated by Bloomberg News Health/Science Reporter Carey Goldberg to discuss needs and resources in our community.

OVERVIEW

Jason Kaufman, PhD., LMFT, Brookline Center for Community Mental Health In-Home Therapy (IHT) Program Manager, Outpatient clinician

Even communities with a lot of resources are straining to address the uptick in anxiety and depression during the pandemic, a traumatic event not unlike a natural disaster. Living in isolation or in lockdown with friends and family 24/7, we have all suffered and don't know when it will end. The norms of basic social life have collapsed and we don't know how they'll be reestablished. Many are living in fear of death/long term illness, losing jobs, losing homes, etc., with the pandemic shining a light on vulnerabilities and disparities of access.

What we have learned – While we have been lucky to have virtual technology as a tool, it doesn't solve the basic human need for warmth, empathy, and attachment, and the limited face to face interaction has been very challenging to mental health. Going forward, we need to be mindful of reestablishing balance between virtual and social spaces, and we need more affordable services, better outreach, and easier, more equitable access.

THERAPY RESOURCES

Rachael Hennessey-Crowell MSW MBA LICSW, Brookline Center for Community Mental Health Manager, School-Based Services and Adolescent/Child Groups Program

[Brookline Center for Community Mental Health](#) offers a wide range of services and a variety of therapies.

* **Therapy** (Intake – 617-860-2084) Though time line for access seems daunting, please get your name on the list if you need info/services -- assignments change weekly according to needs and urgency.

* **Community programs** (857-707-3525, safetynet@brooklinecenter.org) group programs and those targeted to specific populations, often in tandem with other organizations, can often provide quicker access to services, while making every effort to preserve privacy and confidentiality.

* **What to expect** - <https://www.brooklinecenter.org/find-help/what-expect/>

Town of Brookline resources can be found [here](#).

Local and national resources - [Mental Health Care during COVID-19, 4.15](#). You can also access a list of [social services agencies](#).

Self-care is especially important, whether you are already in therapy or in search of services. A number of free apps with a variety of approaches are worth considering—

- Calm
- Liberate ('for the every-day Black experience')
- Insight Timer
- Headspace
- Stop Breathe Think
- Down Dog
- Shine (Black-owned)
- Charcoal (art)
- Autodesk Sketchbook (art)

Online resources to consider – social media groups around a shared experience/interests, podcasts, YouTube, Sleep Stories

And don't forget **exercising**, [mindfulness](#), the **power of the outdoors**, and the importance of **connecting in real life**.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Jon Cohan -- CADAC, LADC, addiction therapy and family addiction counselor, Co-host of Right Mind Media podcast <http://www.joncohancounseling.com/>

With the rise of mental health issues in adults during the pandemic, there has been an explosion of alcohol use issues, from an increase in non-dependency drinking to severe alcohol use disorder (up 300%). Prescription medication and opioid abuse has also increased. Factors include:

- Social isolation
- Financial and job insecurity
- Family stressors
- Less access to services
- Social and political unrest

Everyone is dealing with a full plate, and [many factors can determine if there is a problem](#), but the simplest question to ask is **“Are alcohol and/or other drugs having a noticeable negative impact on your life?”**

If so, **what should you do?**

- Get assessed by an appropriate professional!
- Address mental health issues with your PCP or clinician
- Work with an addiction counselor on cognitive behavioral change and mindfulness
- Attend self-help groups: Alcoholics Anonymous, SMART Recovery, and Recovery Dharma
- Attend an Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) that meets a few times a week.
- Practice Self-Care
- If you experience withdrawal, you may need a detox program

If you think someone you know might need help, reach out. Be supportive and non-judgmental. Encourage talking to family, friends, health care professionals. Remember – a substance abuse disorder is a medical condition, not a moral failing.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE RESOURCES

- [Massachusetts Substance Use Helpline](https://helpline.ma.org/) - <https://helpline.ma.org/> 800-327-5050 - The Helpline is the only statewide, public resource for finding substance use treatment, recovery, and problem gambling services. Helpline services are free and confidential.
- [Shatterproof Treatment Atlas](https://www.treatmentatlas.org/) - <https://www.treatmentatlas.org/> - Confidential assessment for appropriate level of care. Find and compare treatment facilities using trustworthy information on treatment quality.
- [Self Help Groups](#) - Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Marijuana Anonymous, Recovery Dharma, Refuge Recovery, SMART Recovery
- [Allies in Recovery](https://alliesinrecovery.net/) - <https://alliesinrecovery.net/> Free and paid services for families who have a loved one with a substance use disorder. Membership is free for families and individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic