

# Mental Health in the time of COVID

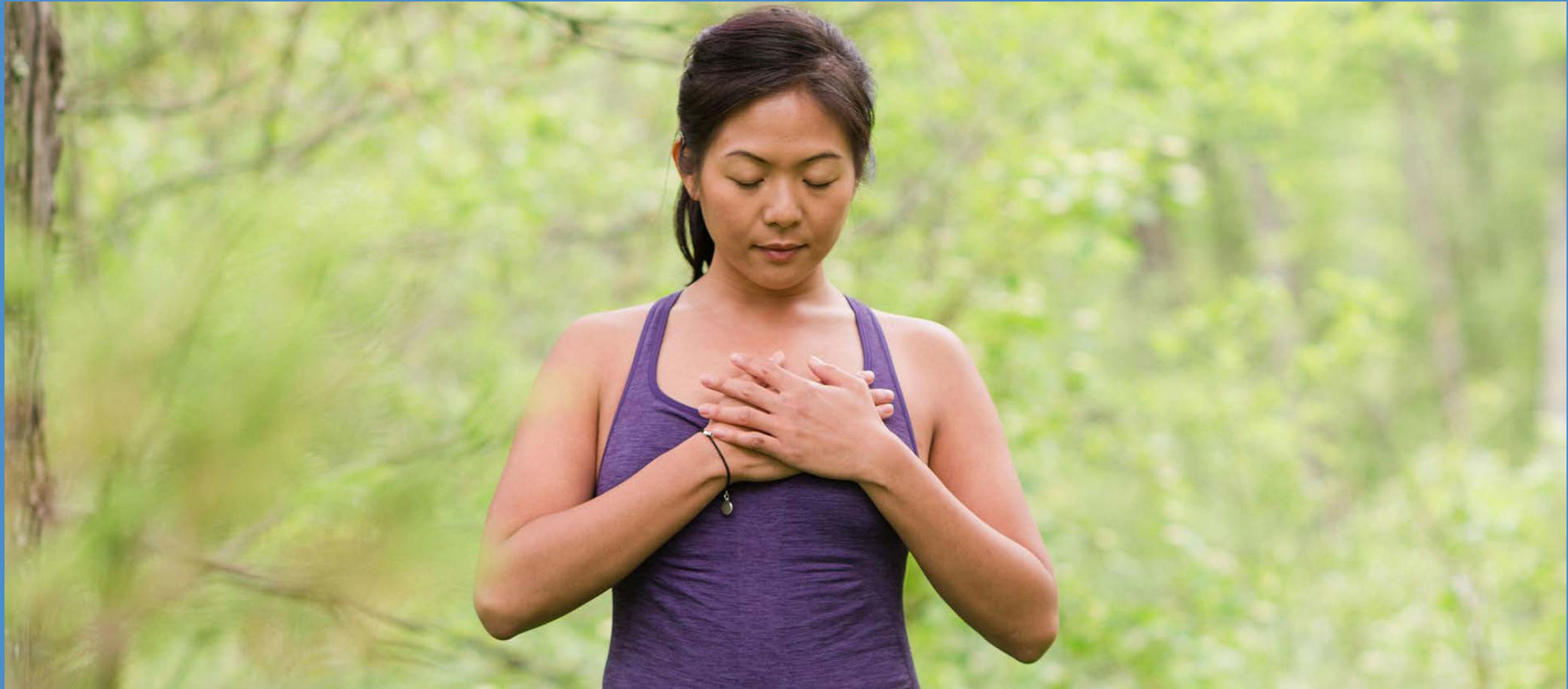


**UCSF** Health  
Brain Tumor Center

Rosemary Rossi, MSW



take a few conscious breaths  
and fully arrive

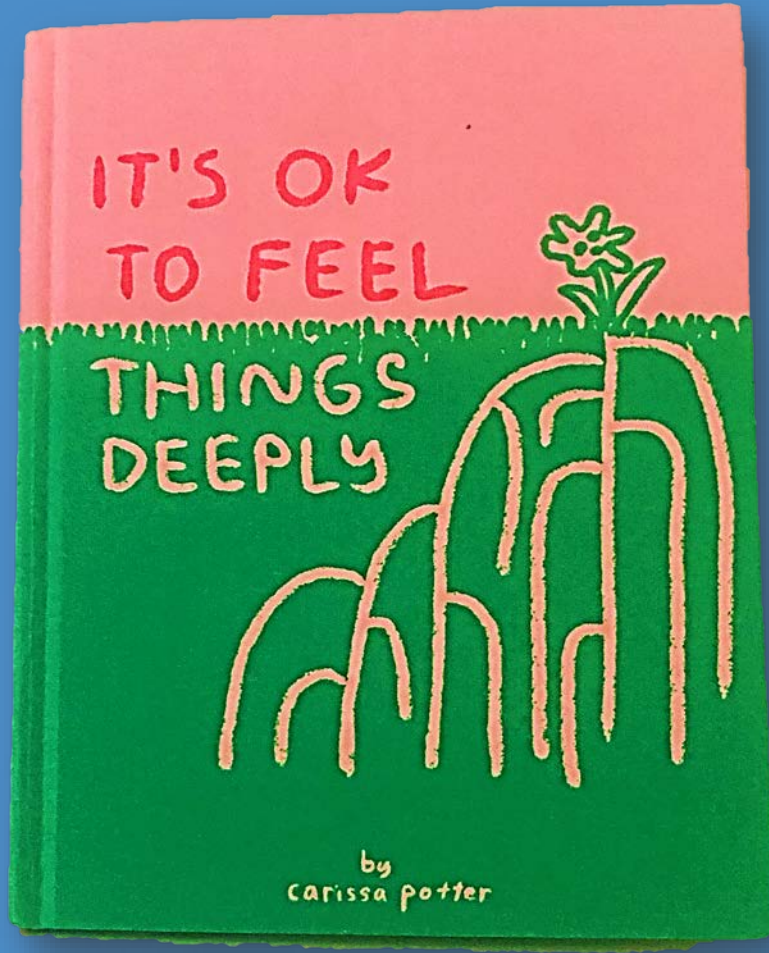




**And no feeling in final.**



Lisa, a nurse on  
our team sent  
me this book...



The first page of the book reads:

**"You are not alone.  
Everyone gets emotional.  
We are all made of the  
same stuff."**



# Michelle Obama: Former US first lady says she has 'low-grade depression'

🕒 6 August 2020

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Michelle Obama spoke of her dismay at much of what is going on in the US

**It's true, we are not alone.**

**Even the former First Lady gets emotional.**

**We are indeed, all made of the same stuff...**



So, let's face it. These are unprecedented times. We are 7 months into living with COVID-19 and it's hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel, hard to imagine getting back to "normal" any time soon...





**Yet, as patients and caregivers, as people living with brain cancer, your “normal” has already been turned upside down! And now this. Maybe you’ve been told that your cancer journey will be more like a marathon than a sprint. And now this. Maybe you’ve experienced a sense of loss and grief. And now this. Maybe you’ve been forced to live with uncertainty. And now this.**

**COVID-19**

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**COVID-19**

**COVID-19**

**UCSF**

However it is for YOU during this global pandemic, one thing remains certain: emotions move. E-motions move. They come and they go. It's natural to have mixed feelings. Loss can live alongside laughter. One feeling does not cancel out the other. You may feel moments of joy and moments of dread all in the same hour. You may feel apathy about what's happening in our country or around the globe, or you may feel worried, helpless or overwhelmed with too many things beyond your control.

TO NAME IT IS  
TO TAME IT



WHAT WE RESIST  
PERSISTS



Attending to our mental health with SELF-COMPASSION and SELF-FORGIVENESS is just as important as attending to our physical health, in fact they are linked. Evidence is growing that the connection between mind and body - between well-being and physical health is real. And in the time of COVID it is vital to focus on taking good care of our mental health.



# The Four M's of Mental Health



# 4M's

NY psychiatrist Sue Varma, former Medical Director of the 9/11 Task Force stated that during times of high stress, it is more important than ever to focus on

**Mindfulness, Mastery, Movement & Meaningful** connection.





The 4 M's are practical tips for everyone. They are small steps we can take every day as we travel on the road to RESILIENCE.

(small steps = something is better than nothing 😊 )

What is mindfulness? Mindfulness simply means a moment-to-moment awareness of one's physical, mental and emotional experiences without judgement. It's paying attention to the present moment. Being right here right now. Mindfulness practice has numerous benefits. We know from research that it can lower levels of anxiety, reduce emotional reactivity, decrease stress, help us cope with feelings of depression, help us manage physical pain, boost our well-being and help build resilience. Experts say to start with just 10 minutes a day. There are many high quality apps like Headspace, Calm and Insight Timer that can help you develop a meditation practice (I love Insight Timer- it's free and I go to sleep with it every night!) You can also practice mindfulness while doing daily activities like washing the dishes, chopping vegetables or brushing your pet- bring your full attention to whatever you are doing. You might choose to sit quietly in nature or in your own space and observe your surroundings, noticing every detail. When your mind wanders, and it will, begin again. Find a method that works for you and start with just ten minutes a day!

## The Four M's of Mental Health

**M**indfulness





Mastery is doing something that you're good at or you're working towards that you care about. It could be a creative pursuit, cleaning out a closet, or completing a puzzle. Any small undertaking that brings you a sense of joy or accomplishment will provide you with a sense of mastery. Do whatever you do without imposing pressure on yourself or demanding perfection. Write it down. Small daily accomplishments can empower us and feel just plain good!

## The Four M's of Mental Health

Mastery



Movement is good medicine! Movement is anything you are capable of doing from rotating your ankles to running a mile; taking a shower to taking the stairs; dancing wildly or tapping your foot to a favorite tune.

Whatever you choose, commit to moving every day. Incorporate movement into your daily life in a way that appeals to you, is safe, and feels doable.

Emotions live in the body, so moving our bodies can help shift our mood.

# The Four M's of Mental Health

**Movement**

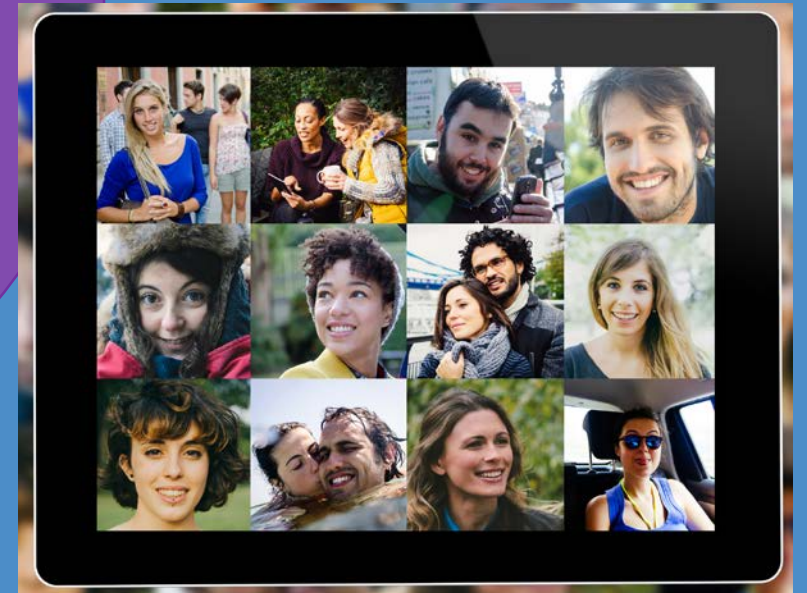




# The Four M's of Mental Health

Meaningful connection decreases isolation. We are wired to connect, but we all have different needs...

**Meaningful**  
connection





**Social  
Connection**

**Solitude**

**Overstimulation**

**Loneliness**

What level of engagement feels good to you? This can change from day to day so check in with yourself. During the time of COVID you may be savoring the solitude, maybe it's a relief that you don't have to go anywhere. On the other hand, you may miss socializing with your friends or chatting with the barista who made your latte every morning. Social distance does not necessarily equal social disconnection. Using facetime can fend off loneliness when we miss seeing peoples' faces. Keeping up with regular meetings like book clubs and support groups on zoom helps us stay engaged with others. Celebrating life events, honoring losses or creating new rituals, all in safe ways, can lend meaning to our lives. Hearing the voice of a loved one over the phone can soothe us during stressful times. Putting deliberate intention behind finding joy, being grateful, laughing, being playful, and taking extra good care of ourselves, our loved ones, our neighbors and our pets can provide meaningful connection and give us a sense of purpose.





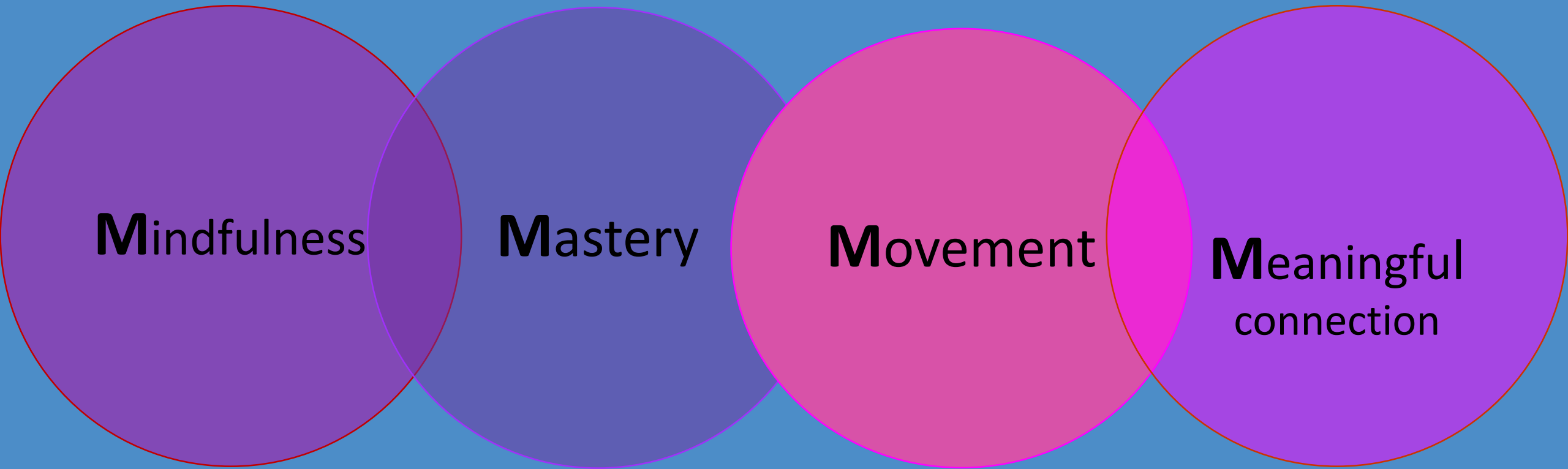
Be aware of how you use social media; it can be the opposite of a meaningful connection. Monitor your news/social media consumption. Find ways to obtain reliable information without overloading your nervous system. Take planned breaks from the screen or a technology fast for a few hours. These are meaningful ways to connect with yourself and also a way to recharge your battery. Try spending time with someone when your smartphone is completely out of reach for 30 minutes. Here's a challenge: watch ONLY nature shows for one weekend and see what happens!



As a person coping with brain cancer, you *might* feel like it's all you can handle right now. That's completely understandable. And yet, reflecting on how all communities, in one way or another, are impacted by the coronavirus might inspire you to support others, despite your own struggles. Reaching out, even in small ways can paradoxically help us feel more connected and more energized. During times like these when everyone is coping with COVID-19, phoning an elderly neighbor, mailing a letter to a faraway friend, making a donation or sharing what you baked *might* help YOU feel better. Altruism is a signpost on the road to resilience.



# The Four M's of Mental Health



Much of the evidence suggests that with a little practice, anyone can develop resilience. The **4 M's** of Mental Health: **Mindfulness**, **Mastery**, **Movement** and **Meaningful** connection pave the way!

Especially now...

A vibrant pink watercolor splash with irregular, feathered edges, centered on a white rectangular background. The splash has a textured, painterly appearance with varying shades of pink.

**BE KIND TO YOURSELF**

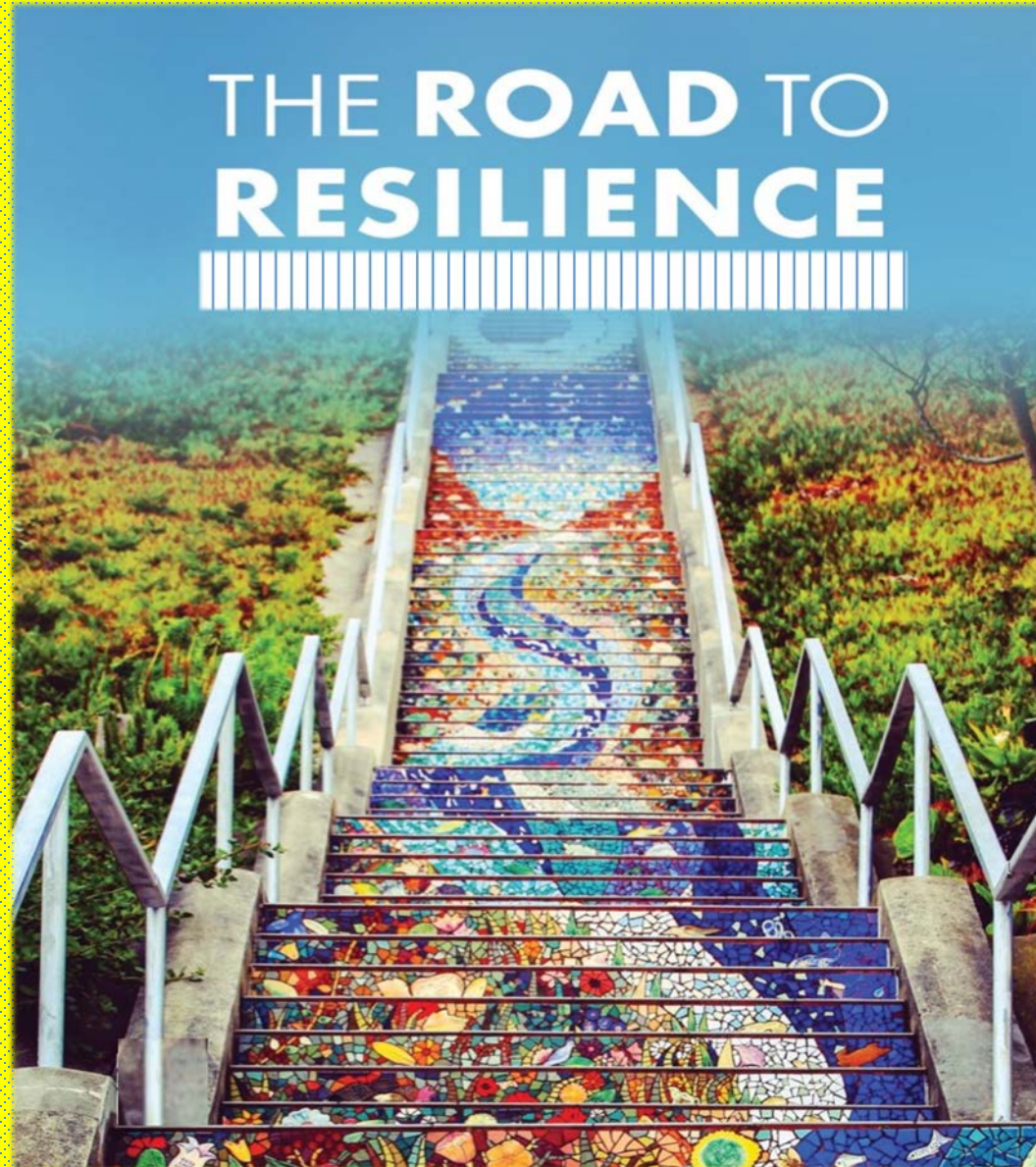
**What you are dealing with is hard.**





Right now, we as a community, a country, and a global family are all coping with uncertainty, and ambiguous, ordinary, and extraordinary loss. We're in this together.

And so, I invite you again to take a few deep breaths and gently close your eyes if it feels safe. Please place your hand on your heart.



As we live in the time of COVID, imagine in your mind's eye that we are open-hearted, smiling within and supporting one another as we travel at our own pace on the road to resilience. Every small step we take matters, to ourselves and to others. And as we cultivate inner confidence, we know deep in our bones, that meeting adversity along the way will make us stronger, remind us of our interconnectedness, and reveal to us what matters most.



# Thanks for your time!



please don't hesitate to reach out