



# Coping with COVID 19

MENTORING NEEDS OF EARLY CAREER CLINICIAN  
RESEARCHERS IN VA

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# COVID 19

- ❖ Stress
- ❖ Anxiety
- ❖ Unprecedented strain for clinicians
- ❖ New challenges for caregiving
- ❖ Social distancing has curtailed our access to traditional means of social support and coping, including access to our professional networks and collaborations





## Objectives and Goals

- ❖ **Share the results of two brief surveys** on how the CDA community is experiencing COVID 19 and its impact on research.
- ❖ **Provide Communication and Guidance** from National HSR & D Leadership
  - ❖ Q and A with David Atkins, M.D., M.P.H.
- ❖ **Offer “Boots on the Ground” Perspectives** from Center Directors
  - ❖ Q and A with Steven Asch, M.D., M.P.H.
- ❖ **Encourage connection (or re-connection) with the Career Development Award Enhancement Initiative (CDAei) Program**
  - ❖ Individually tailored support/mentoring and career development for early career researchers (CDAs) within VA.

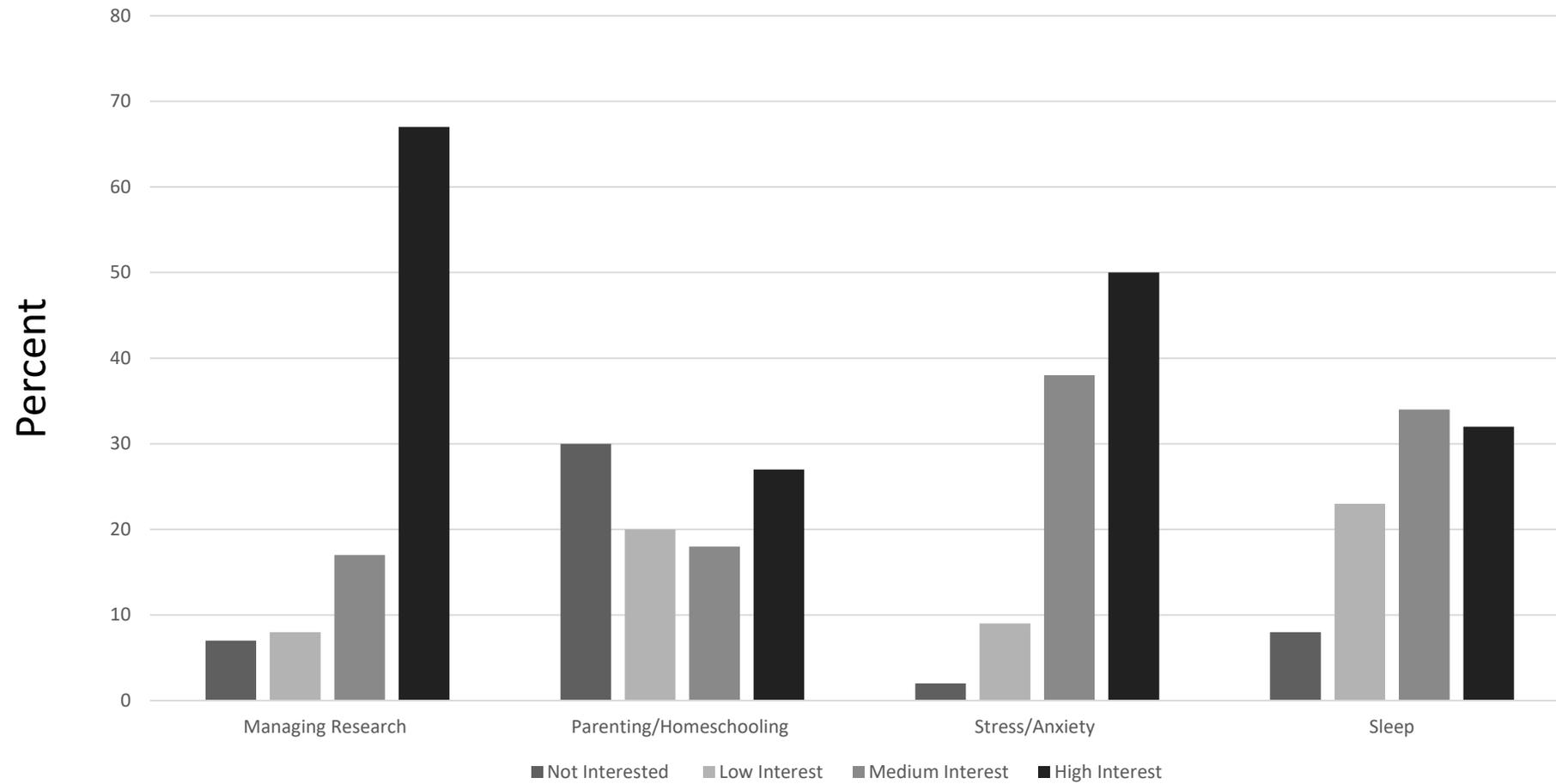
# How is COVID 19 Impacting CDA's?

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- ❖ 60% of HSR & D CDAs who responded to the VA Career Development Award Conference Planning Survey (Gilmartin et al., 2020), report cessation of some projects (or components of projects) due to COVID 19.
  - ❖ < 10% report complete cessation
- ❖ 80% report that COVID 19 has had a moderate impact (some interference) and 10% report high impact (significant interruption) on their current projects (Gilmartin).
- ❖ Some Center Directors report CDAs are showing tremendous leadership in nimbly responding to the need to pivot, adjust, support and advocate for their own research and that of their peers.

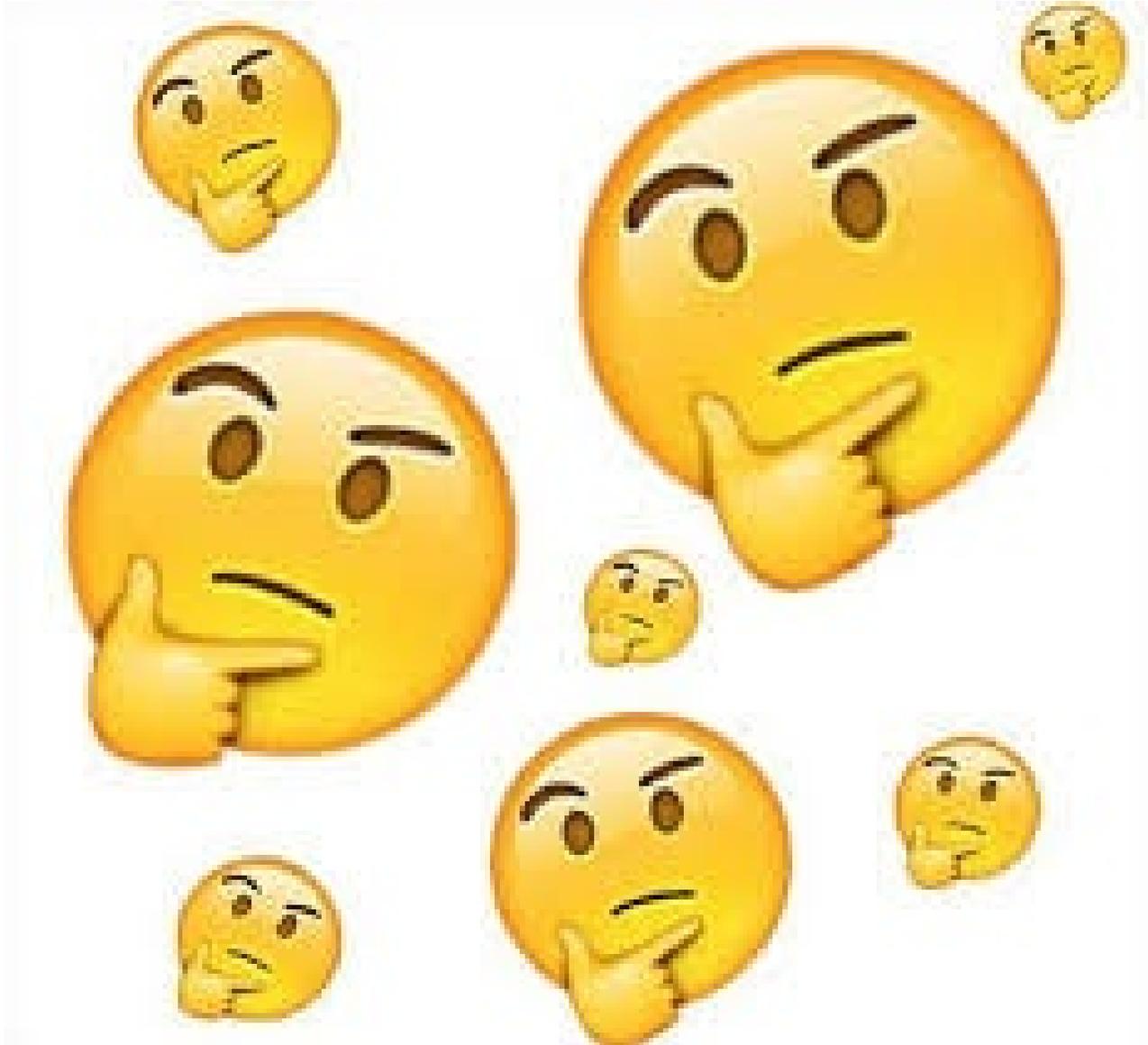


Pre Seminar Responses (HSR & D Community) to Topics of Interest During COVID 19





WHAT IS THE 10,000-FOOT VIEW OF THIS PROBLEM?  
REFLECTIONS FROM, AND Q AND A WITH DR. ATKINS



Poll Question:

Should you pivot to  
take on COVID 19  
research  
opportunities?

YES \_\_\_\_\_

NO \_\_\_\_\_

# Is a pivot more appropriate than staying the course?

## Key Considerations

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- ❖ Does the pivot make sense given my work, expertise, and resources?
- ❖ Is it a logical extension (or expansion of my work)?
- ❖ Is there a reason not to pivot (e.g., I *can* stay the course)?
- ❖ Would it make my work more impactful?
- ❖ How do I see my responsibility as a researcher in responding to COVID 19?

# A Center Director Offers Advice to Researchers about the Pivot...

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“I remind them (researchers and trainees in my center) that the ***solution to the pandemic is going to come from researchers like us.***”

“***We hold the key to solving this crisis,*** and the world is waiting!”

“What ***a special privilege and responsibility*** we have!”

“***Everyone has a sphere of influence and connection that they can call on.***”



# A QUERI DIRECTOR Thinks through the pivot...

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- ❖ “As I see it, there are two important trajectories right now, one is the ***pivot to address COVID 19***. The other is ***staying the course with existing programs of research that facilitate our ability to meet the ongoing medical and mental health care needs of Veterans.***”
  
- ❖ “COVID 19 is important, **staying the course on projects that, for example, address chronic health conditions** in high-risk Veteran population, is also essential.”

# *My research team (RAs, trainees, and colleagues) are struggling... How can I support them?*



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View this as an opportunity to assess the sense of community in your Center, Division, and Lab:

- Who are your leaders and how are they supporting others?
  - Acknowledge and reward their efforts
- Maintain meeting schedules as much as possible:
  - Active listening
  - Sharing self-care tips
  - Managing expectations (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/01/style/productivity-coronavirus.html>)

*“Its hard to reach people now, everyone is stressed and busy, how can we stay professionally connected?”*

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- ❖ Virtual coffee and lunch breaks:
  - Social support
  - Research discussions
  
- ❖ Email messages of support and appreciation.
  
- ❖ Disseminating and facilitating research opportunities (some cope through work!):
  - Track and collate for future reference



# Career Development Award Enhancement Initiative (CDAei) Resources

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The CDAei is designed to:

- (1) Facilitate additional mentorship connections through the National Mentoring Network.
- (2) Offer opportunities to network with peers and colleagues at national meetings (NOW VIRTUAL)
- (3) Provide monthly Cyberseminars which are both learning opportunities and presentation opportunities
- (4) Provide an online toolkit you can use as a resource: <https://www.hsrp.research.va.gov/cdp/toolkit/default.cfm>

To engage with CDAei, please reach out to [Janet.Ekstrom@va.gov](mailto:Janet.Ekstrom@va.gov)

We are happy to coordinate small group discussions among CDAs and mentors about creating COVID 19 collaborations.



COVID-19

## Resources

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COVID Coach

[https://www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/COVID\\_coach\\_app.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/COVID_coach_app.asp)

# Resources

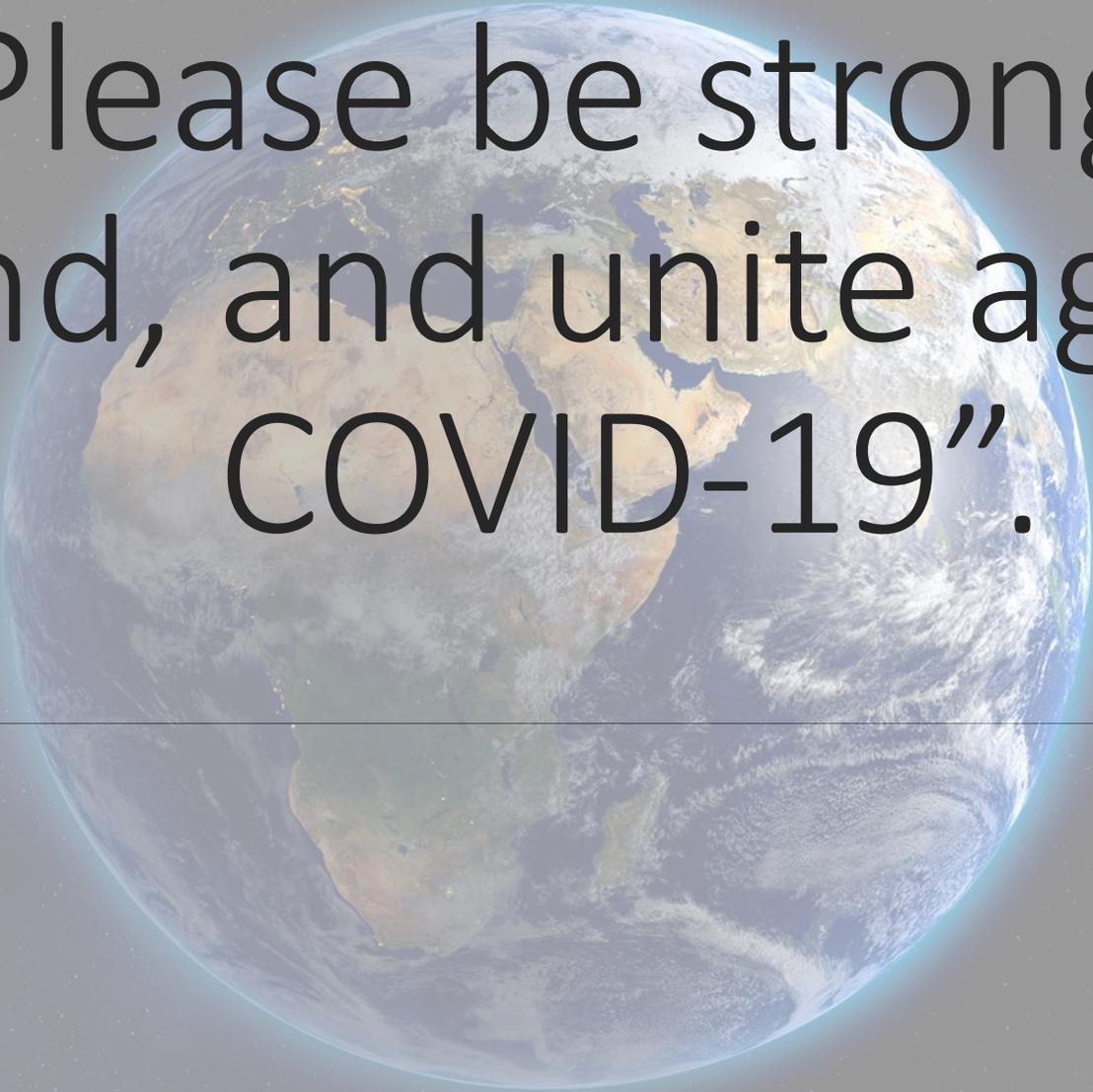
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## NCPTSD Provider Self-Care Toolkit



- ❖ Path to Better Sleep
- ❖ Mindfulness Coach- with a focus on Loving Kindness Meditation and Building Compassion
- ❖ COVID Coach- with a focus on self-assessment and tools for managing stress
- ❖ Mood Coach- to aide with work/life balance
- ❖ Parenting 2 Go App

[\(https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/care/toolkits/provider/\)](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/care/toolkits/provider/)



“Please be strong, be kind, and unite against COVID-19”.

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# Disclosures and Conflicts of Interest

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## **Disclosures:**

The views expressed in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of VA.

**COI:** None

# Got ???

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