

# Maine Psychologist Today

Welcome to the Maine Psychologist Today, MePA's new online newsletter!

## Message from President Tom Cooper, PsyD

Dear Colleagues,

I opened my April remarks in the Spring Newsletter commenting on how unique the times had been. Looking back at those comments today, and thinking of all that has transpired since April, I'm unsure whether it was naive or prophetic. Either way, we continue to live in unique times. In this issue, our Executive Director has compiled an important list of resources related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter



movement. I believe, as psychologists, it is our responsibility to continue discussions about how to respond to the pandemic safely and how to confront institutional racism. Please take a moment to look through them.

Recently, many conversations with my clients have focused on caution-fatigue. While we have discussed this somewhat on the listserv over the past month, it bears revisiting. Many have expressed frustration with the daily COVID-19 precautions and are wrestling with their ability to maintain social distancing while fatigued. In several cases, frustrations are further exacerbated by people who are not adhering to recommendations from the CDC. I struggle with the same feelings and speak with my clients about how difficult it is to offer a helpful response. Very often my suggestions seem inadequate, but maybe not entirely unhelpful.

What I ask clients to do is “thread the needle” between acknowledging and accepting how difficult their current circumstances are, while maintaining some level of greater perspective.

Personally, I have found that one of the best ways to maintain a good mindset is reading history. In discussions with clients, I have referenced *The Splendid and the Vile*, a recent Winston Churchill biography by Erik Larson (for those of you who haven’t read it - it’s fantastic).

*The Splendid and the Vile* not only focuses on Churchill’s leadership, but on the life of average Brits as they survive The Blitz. As difficult as the sacrifices we are asked to make today, they cannot compare to what women, men, and children of the UK went through in 1940 and 1941. While referencing WWII has become cliché in some cases, I have found the comparison helpful for my own perspective. This “threading the needle” has allowed me to normalize how difficult the past few months have been while maintaining or persisting with sacrifices that are necessary to keep others safe. For what it’s worth, a fresh perspective has helped me feel a little less fatigued.

On a lighter note, the idea of “carrying on” reminds me of the parable of the persistent photographer...

A photographer and a group of his friends were out to dinner at a restaurant. Their server was overworked so the photographer went to the bar to ask for a glass of water. The bartender happily obliged. This was a hot evening, so the photographer found himself going back to the bar several times for more water to quench his thirst. Each time the bartender became a little more exasperated and finally said to the photographer, “Why don’t you take a pitcher, it will last longer.”

If you think that’s bad, I was going to share a similar joke about paper but decided not to - it was tearable.

Thomas Cooper, PsyD

## APA Testifies Before Congress



APA CEO Arthur C. Evans Jr., PhD, testified June 30 before the Health subcommittee of the [House Energy and Commerce Committee hearing](#) that examined several pieces of legislation to improve access to mental health services amid the COVID-19 public health crisis. Many of APA's [priority bills](#) were considered by the subcommittee.

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## The US National Pandemic Emotional Impact Report



MePA member, Dr. Sarah Gray, along with fellow researchers Dr. Sarah Ballou at BIDMC and P.I. Dr. Olafur Palsson at UNC Chapel Hill, completed a study focusing on the ways the pandemic has affected the majority of the general population (90% of respondents of a nationally representative group), and also looked at specific categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, and age to assess effects and risk of negative mental health outcomes. The more negative the impact reported by respondents, the more likely they experienced symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress. If they lost someone they personally knew to COVID, they were much more likely to experience negative impact and distress on the scale. [Download Full Report.](#)

## Senator King's Office Contacts MePA for Telehealth Bill Announcement



U.S. Senators Angus King (I-Maine) and Todd Young (R-Ind.) have introduced the Mental and Behavioral Health Connectivity Act legislation to allow Medicare beneficiaries to continue to access mental and behavior health services through telehealth in the near term and after the coronavirus pandemic subsides. Senator King's office reached out to MePA for a quote from President Thomas Cooper to include in the [Press Release](#).

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## The Maine Center for Economic Policy on Black Lives Matter



The simple powerful truth of Black Lives Matter cannot be realized as long as racist structures and policies continue to deprive Black people of equal opportunity, access to economic prosperity, and their very health and lives. [The disproportionately high risk of COVID-19](#), the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and the racist, deadly attack against Ahmaud Arbery, are among the most recent traumas inflicted on the Black community. They are also part of a centuries-long system of racist policies and violence.

Maine is not immune to the reality of racism in our communities, our public policies, or our institutions. Data for our state paints a picture of economic, health, education, and criminal justice systems that [work better for whites than for people of color](#). We must do better.

# Anti-racism Resources

Shared by Susan Maataoui, PhD



There is a wealth of helpful information being shared among my VA mental health-care colleagues, including conversations about being providers of color and how that is impacting them as psychologists and sometimes targets of systemic or overt racism in their work.

Recent national events have reignited a national conversation about race relations. The following links are provided for guidance to raise awareness, and tools for coping with racial trauma:

[Resources for White Parents and Others](#)

[ISPRC Racism Recovery Plan](#)

Here are sites that may offer help as you work with those who are impacted by current events:

[Black Pain Gone Viral](#)

[Racisms Psychological Toll](#)

[Social Media](#)

[Proactively Coping](#)

For those who work with older adults:

[Black Aging Matters: How to Better Address Racism-Related Stress in African](#)

[American Older Adults- APA Webinar on YouTube](#)

[Discrimination in America: Experiences and Views of African Americans](#) (2017, NPR, Robert Wood Johnson, Harvard School of Public Health)

[Health and Health care of African-American Older Adults \(2010\)](#) (PDF, 2.7M) Stanford School of Geriatrics

## Northeast Telehealth Office Hours



Twice-weekly [Telehealth Virtual Office Hours](#) are being offered to help Maine-based clinicians ask questions and expand telehealth services across the state of Maine in response to COVID-19. Contact [netrc@mcdph.org](mailto:netrc@mcdph.org) for more information about joining these office hours, or for reimbursement or policy questions. The Maine-based office hours are a collaborative effort, hosted by the Northeast Telehealth Resource Center (NETRC) and [Maine DHHS](#).

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## Domestic Violence Helpline Callers



Numbers do not tell the whole story when it comes to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on rates of domestic and family violence. A closer look at helpline call volumes since the start of the pandemic shows that people who experience domestic and family violence may see it as a chronic illness to be managed.

[New England Psychologist Article](#)

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## Self-care for Psychologists in a Time of Uncertainty



Standard self-care practices like exercise, a balanced diet, hydration and quality sleep, along with limiting media intake, are the first steps for maintaining mental health. But managing this on-going situation may require more.

[New England Psychologist Article](#)

# The Coming Mental-Health Crisis



*The Atlantic, May 14, 2020*

Even before the COVID-19 crisis, America's infrastructure for mental-health and addiction services was fragmented, overburdened, and underfunded. The coronavirus has put far more stress on that broken system. So far, Congress has failed to shore it up. That oversight will prove harmful to patients and their families and costly to insurers and taxpayers.

[The Atlantic Article May 14, 2020](#)

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## MePA 70th Anniversary: 1950-2020

This year marks the 70th Anniversary of the Maine Psychological Association. In celebration of this milestone, Dr. Ron Breazeale and Dr. Jeff Matranga have compiled our organization's history, including a timeline of Past Presidents and the advancement of psychology as a practice and profession in our state. Books will be available for purchase in September or sooner.

**Save the Date:** MePA's Annual Meeting is scheduled for **Friday, November 13**. In-person or virtual to be determined.

## MePA Telepsychology Webinar Available for CEUs



MePA's well-received Telepsychology Webinar (2 hours) is now [available for viewing on the website](#). To purchase and receive 2 CEU credits by completing a short quiz, the price is \$20 for Members and \$30 for Nonmembers.

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