

Staying Close from a Distance: Strengthening Social Support Amid COVID-19



Hello!

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1.

Learning Outcomes

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- Name and identify forms of informal and formal supports; and predominant theories informing the role of social support in health and mental health.
- Describe the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has compromised social support across cultures while forcing new, emerging meaning and types of support.
- Describe, use, and train others in the use of an online social support network mapping tool (SSNM) developed for evidence-based health promotion interventions and social work practice.

2.

Agenda

Agenda

- Introductions and check-in
- Define social support
- Examine role of social support in health and mental health
 - Theoretical basis for support in stress and coping
- Impact of COVID-19 pandemic
- Profile of impact on Latinx community in NYC
- Introduce SSNM background and current digital tool
- Demonstrate SSNM use for mapping, analyzing and strengthening supports
- Q & A



“What is required to transform the world is dialogue, critical questioning, and love for humanity”

-Paulo Freire-



Psychoeducation

- Well-being in the face of trauma and other stressors
- Individual, family, & community strength & support
- Collaborative community of care
- Cultural relevance & context
- Identify & build on individual & collective strengths & hope
- Builds on Social justice & anti-oppressive practice

Why 'physical distancing' is better than 'social distancing'

Experts laud WHO move to use physical distancing, saying social distancing or isolation isn't good for mental wellbeing.

by Saba Aziz  

30 Mar 2020



Physical Distancing



Social Distancing

Hello, how are you?



Hello
?????



I'm
not
OK



3.

Social Support

Definition

What is Social Support?

“Exchange of resources between at least 2 individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient”

-Shumaker & Brownell, 1984-



What is Social Support?

“Reduces, or buffers, the adverse psychological impacts of exposure to stressful life events and ongoing life strains”



**Bring us
together!**



4.

Social support on health and mental health

History
Types
Role
Theories

Brief History of Social Support

Mary Richmond

Informal and formal social supports

Social case work among new immigrants to the U.S. and work in communities in NY

Jane Addams

Settlement houses. Building from the individual level to community level supports

John Barnes (1954)

Knit networks in Norway

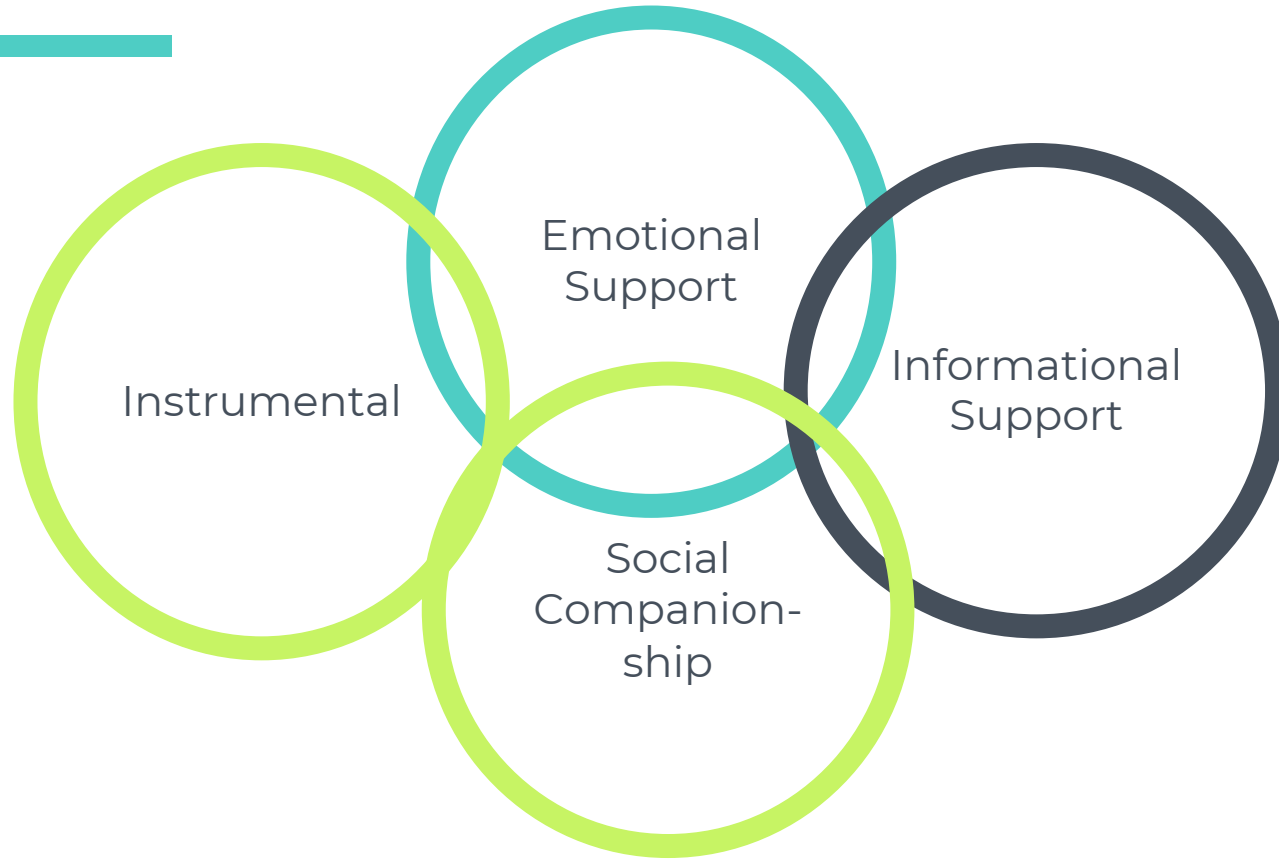
John Cassel (1976)

Epidemiologist, first to publish findings that social support serves as a key psychosocial “protective” factor

Tracy & Whitaker (1990)

Social Support Maps and Networking measures

Four types of social support



Four types of social support

1. Emotional Support = Esteem Support

Being accepted by others and having one's self worth validated



Four types of social support

2. Informational Support = Advice = Appraisal

Receiving help in defining, understanding and coping with problems



Four types of social support

3. Social Companionship

Spending time with others in recreational activities; may serve as a distraction from stress



Four types of social support

4. Instrumental Support=practical

Being provided with material, tangible, goods, or services, e.g. money, childcare, borrowing a car, getting a ride, etc.



Poll

What is a Social Support Network?

1. A person-centered web of social relationships
2. A theoretical construct describing a connection of social supports used for studying support

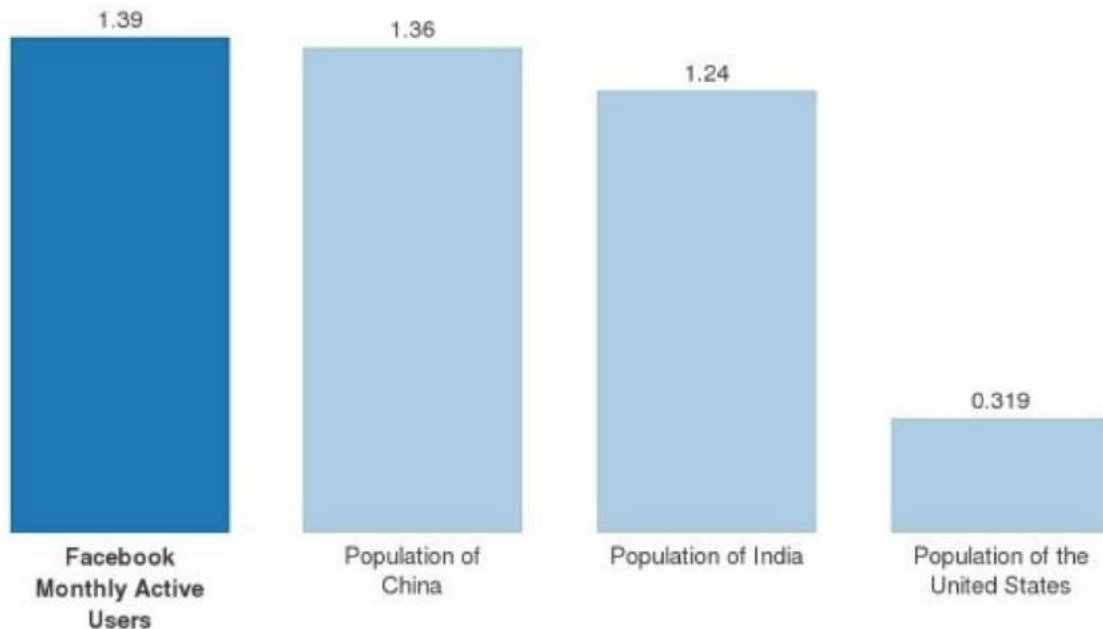


Social Media as Social Support



How Big Is Facebook?

Facebook has more active users than China has people (figures in billions)



Source: Facebook, CIA World Factbook

Poll

Functions of social support:

Health sustaining and stress reducing

- 1. Gratification of affiliative needs** = decreased feelings of isolation and loneliness, increased feelings of worth and belonging
- 2. Maintenance and enhancement of self-identity** = increased development of personality which can be either positive or negative
- 3. Self-esteem enhancement** = validation of one's sense of value and adequacy.

Theoretical Foundations of Social Support

- Social exchange theory (Cobb 1976, Shumaker & Brownell 1984)
Giving and receiving
- Social competence (Cassel 1976; Pender 1987, White 1959, Lawton 1983)
Effectively interact with our environment
- Social comparison theory (Swann & Brown 1990; Festinger 1954, Stewart 1993)
We compare ourselves to others

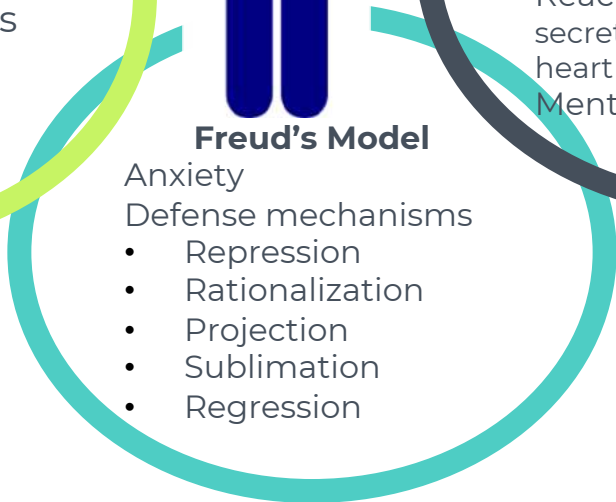
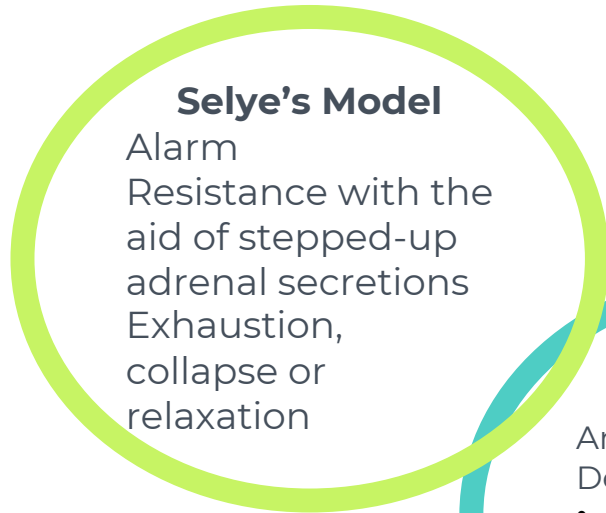
What is Stress?

1. A psychological and physical response of the body that occurs whenever we must adapt to changing conditions, whether those conditions are real or perceived, or if they are positive or negative
1. Stress has biological, cognitive and sociocultural components.

Three major categories of stress

- **Life events** : acute changes, including major behavioral changes for a short period of time
- **Chronic strains**: persistent/recurrent demands => readjustments over a prolonged period of time
- **Daily hassles** : over the course of the day

Human Response to stress





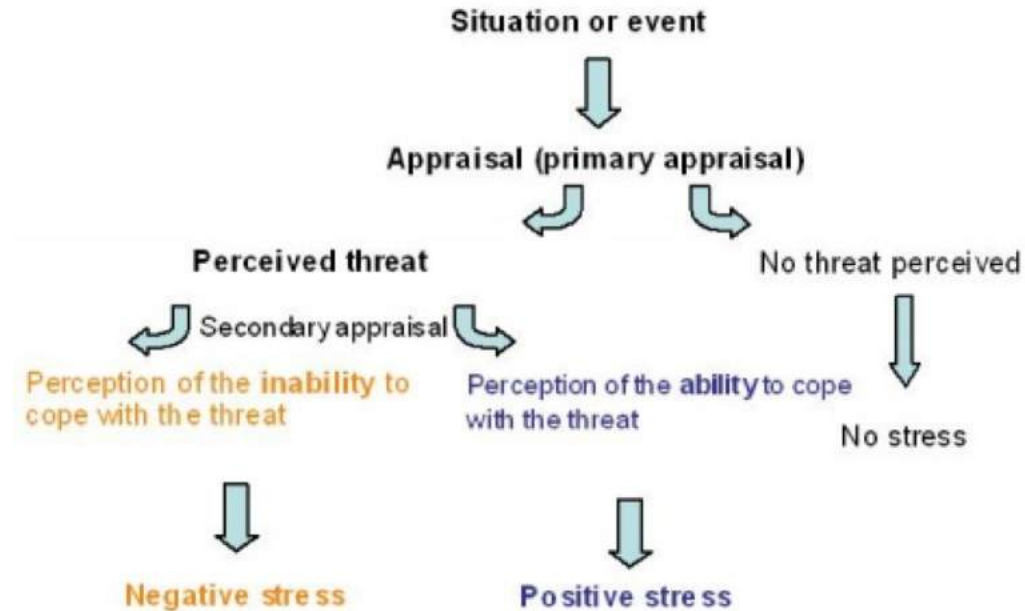
Its not stress that kills us, it is our reaction to it.

(Hans Selye)

izquotes.com

Transactional model of stress

(Lazarus, Folkman, 1984)



Lazarus, S. Folkman, 1984

How does social support influence coping with stress?

- **Main effect:** Social support is always helpful in times of stress or not

“more is better”

- **Buffering effect:** Social support helps to buffer our experiences of stress by providing support enabling us to reappraise the situation

“it’s not so bad”

QUESTIONS?



5.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic

-
- Physical distancing: sheltering, “lockdown”
 - Daily, chronic and emergent stressors leading to compromised mental health
 - Lack of traditional access to social supports
 - Isolation ≠ Loneliness
 - New ways of staying connected and feeling support









**What role can
social support
play
and how may we
strengthen it?**

6. Profile of Impact of COVID-19 on Latinx community in NYC

South Bronx, an
example of
community
based needs

NYC Context & COVID-19

Death rates in NYC

- Latinx individuals (34%)
- Black (28%),
- White (27%),
- Asian (7%)

High concentration of COVID-19 cases in the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn

The Bronx is poorest district in US



160 Latinx families

Survey conducted by the Mexican Coalition, March
2020

68%

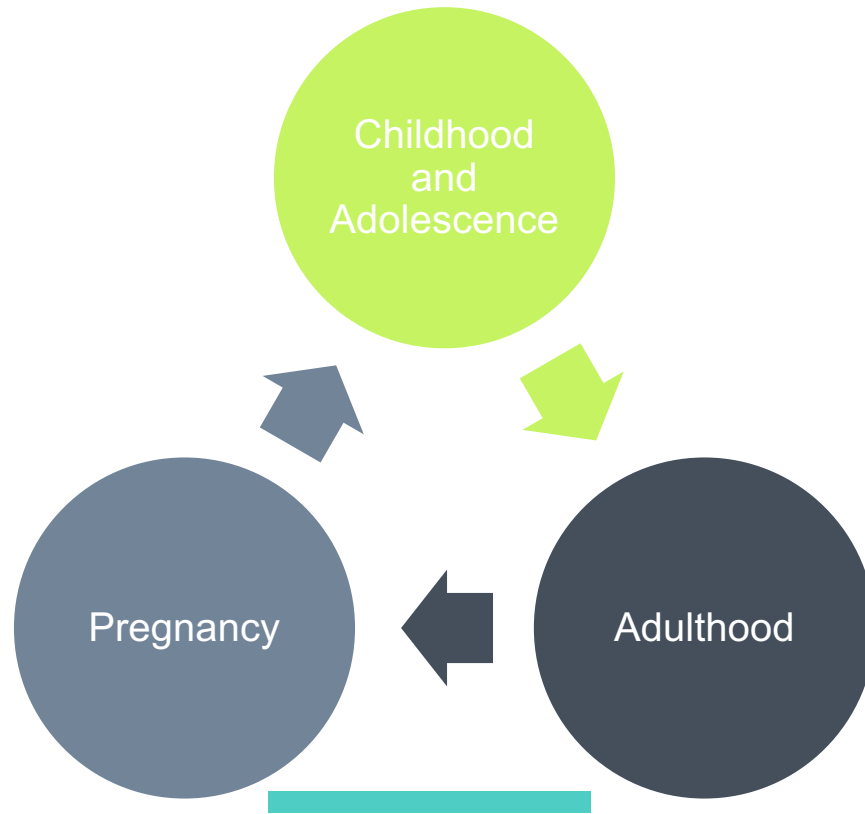
Have been living in NYC for more than 14 years

78%

Have no enough money to pay for food, rent, and basic needs

91%

Have children younger than 18 years old



COVID-19 AND ITS EFFECTS ON LATINX LIFE CYCLE

Latinx and life cycle amid Covid-19

Pregnancy

Lack of appropriate nutrition/food insecurity

Prenatal care

Giving birth in isolation separated from family

Anxiety, depressive sx's, sleep problems

Childhood & Adolescence

Limited space at home

Food insecurity

Lack of internet

Lack of resources for e-learning

Worrying about family's financial insecurity

Fear of parents/family members getting sick or dying

Anxiety, depressive sx's, sleep, appetite problems

Latinx and life cycle amid Covid-19

Adulthood

Structural inequality (e.g., unemployment, underemployment, housing, food insecurity)

Essential workforce, yet not enough protection from systems

Thwarted parent's ability to meet their children's basic and emotional needs

Breakdown families' abilities to cope with and to engage in loving family ties

Impact the tight-knit relationships, which is known to be an important protective factor for youth growing up in poverty

Losing family members of COVID-19

Dying in isolation

Lack of religious and proper funeral services

Inability to support family members in their country of origin

Fear, anxiety, depressive sx's, sleep problems

6.

Social Support Network Map SSNM

Introduction
Background
Digital Tool

SSNM

- Web-based tool
- Evolved from early versions of paper-based social network and ecomapping tools.
- Developed by Dr. Susan Witte and members of the investigative team at the Social Intervention Group to test the implementation of a web-based HIV prevention intervention for couples called Connect (NIMH R01 MH080659).

7.

SSNM Demonstration

Mapping
Analyzing
Strengthening



Social Support Network Map

- Compose
- Inbox 214
- Starred
- Snoozed
- Sent
- Drafts 42
- ADA Projects 2015-2018
- Archives 17
- 2012
- 2013 1
- 2014
- COVID-19 19
- Personal 3
- UVM
- CDC Connect-relat... 16
- Connect Dissemi... 2
- Female condom 8
- HIV Center T32
- HVCS 6
- Start a meeting
- Join a meeting

Topic: [Social support with my children while I am struggling with covid-19](#)

Owner: [Carolina](#)



- + Add a person
- Export
- Print
- New map

Support Type

- Empathy**
Susan (friend),
- Advice**
Susan (friend), Mexican Coalition
- Social**
Susan (friend),
- Practical**
Susan (friend), Sam (student CUSSW), Mexican Coalition

Poll

Interventions to strengthen social support

- Group vs. individual interventions;
- Professionally led vs. peer-provided treatment;
- Interventions where
 - an *increase of network size* or perceived support was the primary target vs.
 - those where *building social skills* (to facilitate support creation) was the focus

Increasing network (informal)

- Connecting in new ways with known supports
- Support groups
- Clubs with shared interests
- Community events
- What kinds of things have you done in your life to increase your network?

Increasing network (formal)

- ▣ Resource and referral
- ▣ Strengthen by practicing help seeking skills
 - ▣ Making phone call
 - ▣ Requesting a referral
 - ▣ Visiting an agency
 - ▣ Following up

Social network interventions for health behavior change

Hunter, R. F, et al. (2017). *The Lancet*, 390, S47.

- Systematic review over 23,000 papers yielding 39 rigorous studies of 4 types of intervention:
 - **Individual:** *using network data to identify individuals*
 - **Segmentation:** *directed to groups of people clustered in a network*
 - **Induction:** *activation of existing social ties to diffuse healthy behaviors; and*
 - **Alteration:** *changing the structure of the network by addition of new or deletion of old members.*

Preparation for Practice

- Create your own SSNM for
 - 1) general support and
 - 2) support for a specific issue for work
- With a partner take turns conducting a social network map using the *online tool* with each other.
- Conducting an analysis of social support network
 - What is the “issue for work?”
 - Where are there strengths?
 - Weaknesses? How to strengthen?

Considerations for Preparation for practice

- For the client
 - How did you find the process of having an online map constructed about you?
 - What did the clinician do that made you feel particularly good, strong, engaged, understood?
 - What did the clinician do that might have improved your experience?
 - Did your network look any different this time compared to when you constructed your own? How?
- For the clinician
 - What was challenging? Surprising?
 - What additional tool did you choose to use and why?

In summary

- **Social support** occurs when you believe that others are perceptive and receptive to your needs.
- One need only perceive social support for it to be beneficial
- There are many health and mental health benefits to social support, including reduced stress and improved overall health.
- The COVID-19 Pandemic has challenged us to find new ways to support each other despite physical distancing and we are they can be implemented to successfully reduce health and mental health risks and outcomes.
- SSNM useful tool to engage in discussion and counseling regarding the important role of SS in our lives especially as a way to buffer from or reduce negative health/mental health outcomes.

Thanks!

Questions?

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Credits

- Mexican Coalition
- Presentation template by [SlidesCarnival](#)
- Photographs by google images