

## AMDA recognizes that surviving COVID requires “Healing Together”

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We just passed the one-year mark of what many healthcare professionals describe as the most difficult year of their careers. Importantly, most of us are suffering from emotional and psychological trauma. In the early months of the pandemic, some homes endured the deaths of many residents while suffering dire shortages of essential resources. Over time, social isolation and staffing shortages have created a crisis of human interaction that continues to have untold consequences.

**In honor of Mental Health Awareness month, AMDA wishes to formally acknowledge the pain we have all endured, and continue to endure, by launching the “Healing Together” campaign.** We begin today by sharing an extensive list of resources assembled by the Behavioral Health Advisory Council. These are meant to be shared with all partners in this work, from food services professionals to medical providers, to administrative staff and environmental services teams, and everyone in between.

Every home is unique. Each community must first take account of the specific ways that COVID affected their teams (and is still impacting them) and identify ways to support each other moving forward. The Behavioral Health Advisory Council will make this a focus for the coming year and provide content to support the process. Key features will include trauma-informed conversation guides and teachings on self-compassion. Research is clear that there is no one way to deal with grief or trauma, but that we must engage in the emotional processing of loss to restore function and even achieve a higher level of functioning.

Collective trauma requires collective healing, and it begins with sharing our stories. Our work in nursing homes across the country suggests that people are eager to tell their stories, and that telling them brings a great sense of relief. Themes have included survivor guilt, ambivalence about the word “hero,” burnout, compassion fatigue, complicated grief, fear staff may have unintentionally spread the virus, and deep convictions for doing their jobs well and staying “strong.” All of these feelings are normal and need to be validated. As we embark on the next phase of the COVID journey, we encourage each of you to reflect on this last year, to listen to one another gently and non-judgmentally, and to make a commitment to “Healing Together.”

*May 27, 2021*

### *Our Vision:*

*A world in which all post-acute and long-term care patients and residents receive the highest- quality, compassionate care for optimum health, function, and quality of life.*