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Please stand by for realtime captions. >> Hello and welcome. This is a session entitled, Managing Anxiety and Worry During Uncertain Times. My name is Art Maines, a licensed clinical social worker. And a trainer for Magellan Healthcare. I want you to know that Magellan is here for you and your employees and families during this stressful and uncertain time. Remember to reach out to your HR department for your company a person company's specific toll-free number and website, and keep yourself informed through websites such as CDC.org, and check with your physician, local ER and medical professionals for questions. I want to bring your attention to the file pod in the upper left-hand screen, it is up above the slides, and in the file pod you will see a couple of lines, the first one is for the Magellan Healthcare COVID-19 response website. So, to access the link, click on the file title, highlight it and click browse at the bottom of the pod to open another window in your Internet browser, taking you to the site. You will also find a link to the CDC website, up in the file pod to the left. So it is important we all keep ourselves informed and take care of ourselves during this time. So, immunity is a topic that is getting a lot of attention right now. Our goal for this training is to raise your psychological immunity to stress and worry, so that you stay in the best shape possible to handle the crush of demands on you right now. And also in the best shape possible to be there for your family and loved ones and take good care of yourself. And we are here to help you get through this and come out the other side whole and intact.

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To that end, we have a set of objectives here, that will Willis down the road of boosting your psychological immunity. We will begin with defining the negative effects of anxiety and worry and how they effect your body. We will identify some thought patterns that lead to anxiety and worry and also demonstrate a formula to help navigate anxiety and worry. We will also talk about tips to help others deal with excessive anxiety and worry. And we will share additional support resources toward the end. Ultimately, we want to give you both the mindset and some skills for better managing anxiety and worry during this uncertain time.

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Feeling anxious at a time like this is very normal. We do not like uncertainty, ambiguity, unpredictability, and all three are present in the current situation with COVID-19. Sometime so-called expert dismiss stress as, all in your head and spout platitudes. That stuff does not work. What does work is being realistic and dealing with reality in a skillful and effective way. A way that builds your psychological immunity. So, let's take a quick overview of the challenges we are working with here. You will notice the language I am using. I want to keep us moving in a direction of reframing everything that we are facing as challenges. This is about resilience and a growth mindset along the flexible adaptability. Let's clarify what we mean when we talk about worry. Where he is feeling uneasy or being overly concerned about a situation or problem. Now, it may surprise you but not all worry is bad. In fact a healthy level of worry can help us perform better at work, look out for dangerous, and learn from our mistakes. It can

actually help us they alert and oriented to the situation that requires our attention. However, worrying can get out of control, and with excessive worrying, your mind and body go into overdrive, as you constantly focus on what might have been. We are all familiar with that what if, what if, what if, merry-go-round. You may experience high anxiety and even panic. Excessive worrying dumps stress hormones into our bloodstream, creating physiological changes that earlier evolved to help protect us. The problem is, when we don't know how to effectively bring ourselves back to a state of greater relaxation, worry and anxiety can become chronic stress. So, one useful way of thinking about anxiety is a misuse of imagination. Worry is a constant or near constant mental rumination, lots of repetitive thoughts that don't take us anywhere useful or helpful. They just keep us going around and around that what is merry-go-round. Because of the way that our mind and thinking affect our bodies, we could end up with undesirable symptoms. More about that in a moment. Keep in mind that our minds can make everything worse, but we can learn how to use our minds to help ourselves. Here is a quick reflection question for you. Do you think anxiety is a common experience in regular life? Let alone right now? Do you think anxiety is a common experience? As you reflect on your experience of life these days and what you have been hearing, given that anxiety is fairly common or fairly unusual? Of course especially during these times anxiety is common. In any given year the anxiety disorders Association of America reports that about 40 million American adults experience an anxiety condition. Of course as we are recording this, it is too early to say how it will effect everyone's overall mental health. But our situation has undoubtedly caused a spike in anxiety and worry. Now if you are a chronic worrier, you may have a sense of impending doom or unrealistic fears that only increase your worries.

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You might be more sensitive than normal to your environment. And perhaps to the criticism of others, which can lead to seeing anything and or anyone as a potential threat. Another way of thinking about anxiety is that it is a process in search of contents. Meaning, it is an overactive brain that is constantly scanning for threats or risks, and sometimes creating them, rather than accepting the ambiguity of the situation, the state of not knowing. But, worrying of course can effect your daily life so much that it can interfere with your appetite, lifestyle habits, relationships, sleep and job performance. Many people that worry are so anxiety ridden, that they will seek unhealthy habits like overeating, cigarette smoking, using alcohol and drugs. Many of these can lead to a kind of rebound anxiety and excessive and repetitive negative self-criticism. So, let's touch briefly on some physical symptoms of anxiety. As a quick reminder. Now as we go through this I would like you to note your particular vulnerabilities. What is your body's anxiety style? What are some of the physical effects that you experience with anxiety and worry? When we have excessive anxiety and worry a triggers stress response, which we know otherwise as the flight or fight response. So you see that the body responds to how you think, feel and behave. When you are under constant stress, the body can begin to react by the, by becoming physically ill. When excessive worry goes on for long periods and you do not allow your body to get back to a state of relaxation, into what we call parasympathetic

dominance, you can attack your mind and body, you overstimulated and depleted at the same time. Numerous studies on health and wellness has shown that stress is a configuring contribute in factor because chronic stress can actually lower immunity. So thinking again about your personal experience and the experience of those that you know, what do you think are some of the common physical experiences of anxiety and worry? Reflect on your own experience and the experience of those around you. Well, some of the physical symptoms include headaches, tension headaches in particular. You may have trouble sleeping, feeling sleep is less restorative. You may have feelings of frustration or irritability. Some people feel dizzy any kind of nervous, on edge energy. You may also have feelings of being weak and tired. Sweating more. You may have muscle tension, aches especially as we were saying, headaches but also low back pain or shoulder and neck pain. People may tremble more, they may have an onset of a kind of tremor that is related to anxiety. And as I was mentioning a moment ago, evidence for decreased immune response with excessive anxiety and worry. We also look for gastrointestinal problems such as heartburn, upset stomach, constipation or diarrhea. It just kind of messes up your body. Going further, you may also notice that there is dry mouth, something that presenters often experience, until they get very, very versed in their craft and they look at presenting as an exciting or fun thing. Dry mouth makes it difficult to swallow, for example, you may feel like you have a lump in your throat, for example. Also you could have issues with your heart. It can lead to racing heart, high blood pressure even, shortness of breath and even indication in the research that it may play a role in the development of heart arrhythmias and things like atrial fibrillation. So if you might think that you might be an excessive worrier or the worry that you experience is affecting you in a negative way, it is a good idea to think about getting some additional assistance. I will say more about that a little later. But before we move on to the next slide, I want to encourage you to work on methods for settling your body, things like deep breathing and mindfulness meditation. Let me do a little bit of breathing with you right now. Just to sort of get you into the spirit of it and nudge you in a friendly way to make sure that you are settling in your body and moving to the relaxation of the fight or flight response. We will do a simple breathing experience here. What I would like you to do is get as comfortable as you can. Then I would like you to breathe in gently, to the count of one. Two. Three. Four. Five. Hold briefly and exhale. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Rest. Now, breathing again. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Hold briefly, exhale. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Now, that was of course just a very brief, little reminder about how breathing and paying attention to your breathing can help you to settle your body and that can start to slow down your mind. Be sure to tend to your body with things like I just shared with you or through meditation and mindfulness. There are so many apps available and many resources available for you on the Magellan Healthcare website, for your particular company or organization.

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All right, so now let's talk a little bit more about when you may consider seeking help. Being in a high stress situation, like we are all facing right now with the demands of the coronavirus crisis, will

naturally raise your levels of anxiety and stress. But if you or someone you know has been dealing with one or more of the symptoms on this slide, then in her most

days or a period of time, it is a good time to reach out for some help. You may want to start with your primary care physician and/or your employee assistance program. And remember you do not have to go it alone here. Okay? You have folks I can help you out. If you are experiencing, or people you know are experiencing things like worrying a great deal about every day things, or feeling like things are out of your control, if you have trouble controlling your constant worries, if you know you worry much more than you or others think you should, and you find you are unable to relax, you have a hard time concentrating, or if you are easily startled, what we call an exaggerated startled response. Like little things make you don't. If you have trouble falling or staying asleep, that is an indicator that you could probably benefit from some help. If you feel tired all or most of the time, especially if you have headaches, flares, stomach aches or unexplained pains. If you find yourself traveling, twitching, if you find yourself irritable, sweating excessively and/or feeling lightheaded or out of breath. These all are indicators that it is a good idea to reach out and get some help to manage your anxiety and worry that much less. I'm glad you are listening to this recording. It also helps you lower the level of stress to a manageable and reasonable level. I mentioned earlier in the session that we were going to talk about some skills. So next, I want to give you a method for you to use to self coach yourself around anxiety and worry. All right. So we are going to cover three broad areas of skills. We are going to work on analyzing the situation, evaluating the accuracy of your thoughts, and improving upon and clarifying what you can control. So, an important question to answer for yourself is this, are you the master of your mind, or are you at its mercy? Now the way that we perceive something and how we've been choose to cope with it is called our mental adjustment of style. There are five major styles. The first one is called fighting spirit. The second is helpless or hopeless. The third is anxious preoccupation. The fourth is fatalism, and the fifth is avoidance. Now, just for your own amusement, if you will, which style do you think is associated with the highest distressed and worst outcomes? Let me read them to you again. Fighting spirit, helpless/hopeless, anxious preoccupation, fatalism, avoidance. So, which one, which style was associated with the highest distressed worst outcomes. You probably guessed and all right, a 2013 study of 202 individuals found that the anxious preoccupation style was associated with the highest distressed and worst outcomes. But what style do you think had the best outcome? Remember? What style do you think had the best outcome, fighting spirit, hopeless/hopeless, anxious preoccupation, fatalism, or avoidance? You undoubtedly guessed it, the fighting spirit style. It involves a realistic optimistic attitude and clear idea of the situation. It is shown for the best outcomes of patients with cancer, HIV and and stains renal disease, for example. -- And stage renal disease, for example. The way that you look at challenges matters a great deal. Building a healthy and clear eyed start of control starts with knowing a few ways on how we are wired to survive. Number one, our brains are like Velcro for the bad and Teflon for the good. They remember negative events more easily than positive ones. So, that means that we have to shift that balance, we have to

move our brains, train our brains to be more like Velcro for the bad, Velcro for the good and Teflon for the bad. Another key

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Those are the steps. Analyze the situation, evaluate the accuracy of your thought, improve upon what you can control. This will build your ability to practice a key skill for feeling better. Information, plus having a plan reduces anxiety. As much as possible, let's make worry productive and helpful.

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Let's begin with analyzing your situation. So, if you have a piece of paper or a hand out perhaps that goes with this from your company or organization, I would like you to write down on your piece of paper as many things as you can think of, that you worry about. Now we are not turning this in for a grade for an English teacher, there is no need to elaborate. Just make a brief statement so you know what you mean. And just write down as many things as you can think of right now. All of the things that you are worrying about, as much as you can. All right, next, pick the top three things you worry about the most and write those down. And if you can, include why you are worried about the particular issues. Okay? Now, what is the one thing that you worry about the most? Circle that one or underline it. Next step, rate how worried you feel about each situation that you wrote on your piece of paper. I want you to rate them on a scale of 1 to 10, with one meaning that you feel mildly worried and 10 meaning extremely worried. Please write the number next to each statement.

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Now I would like you to look at your list. Would you say these are the things you focus on throughout the day? How do you feel when you think about these things? For example, you might feel low energy or energized. Maybe you feel fear or detached. How do you feel when you think about these things? Okay, next we will get into the meat of things here. That is evaluate the accuracy of your thoughts. That is, what evidence do you have that these things are true? This has two parts. First I want you to take a moment to analyze these thoughts and determine what evidence you have that the worry or the extent of your worry is true. So, for our session just focus on one of the three things that worries you the most. Focus on the one that ranked the highest when you were scaling your worry. Now, however I would love for you to complete this process later for the other worries on your list. As I tell people all the time, practice makes permanent. If you practice the stuff it will become second nature for you and you will be able to do this on the fly with whatever is going on in your life. You will not have to bother writing it down. While you build the skills and acquire the skills, write the things down and finish them up later. Now write down all the concrete evidence you have that supports your concern. Now I would want you to consider these questions as you think through this. Am I blowing this out of proportion from the facts? Ideally we want the facts to fit the feelings and the feelings to fit the facts. Another question, am I so sick focusing on the negative and minimizing the positive? Remember our Velcro/Teflon thing. Next

question, am I jumping to conclusions? Next question, am I taking this too personal? And, am I putting unrealistic expectations on myself and others? Sometimes we fall into a kind of perfectionism when we are stressed or anxious. It has to be just right, perfect, everything has to go just the right way. Well, this is real life and it will not do that. Okay?

Now, if you find out that the fear or extent of fear is irrational or overblown and there really is no concrete evidence that this could happen, or that you really are blowing it out of proportion, I want you to cross it off your list and go to your next fear and then do the same thing. You may not get through all three while you listen to this program so I want you to start working on situation or problem that you worry about the most first and then come back and do the other ones. All right. The next part of this step is very important. So I want you to take your time and work yourselves through this.

This is important because we are going to take these worries, which you may feel paralyzed or powerless over, and turn them into something that you can manage.

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We feel powerless when we see the problem without a solution. I want you to take what you were worried about, and change it to a how or what statement. This is key to making worry productive, helpful and useful. Let me give you an example. Let's say you are constantly worried about the welfare of your families these days with all the COVID-19 stuff. You could change that statement to, what can I do to help ensure my family's welfare? Notice how it changes the worry into something that you can change or manage or take action on. It challenges you to think about how you can deal with the situation and what your options are, such as teaching your kids about social distancing, effective handwashing, etc., etc. ask yourself how confident you are about you and your family's hygiene behaviors. Are there areas that could use reinforcement or additional work? Do we need to do handwashing coaching or remind the kids about social distancing? You cannot have friends over right now, but you can do face time or that sort of thing. Okay? So,

brainstorm some of the options that you have for the situation. Just a word or two about the options, that is all you need right now, enough to jog your memory. Okay? All right. Take a minute and finish that up. Next, we are going to go further with control. Realistically there are of course going to be some things you do not have control over. There are going to be things that you have some control or at least some influence over. That is pretty much true with anything in life. Even with things there can always be parts that you can control or at least influence. I want you to look at the how and what statements and some of the options you have written down. Now write some action steps that you can take to do something about what you are worrying about. Make sure you write exactly what you are going to do and when you are going to do it. Okay, so write down what you are going to do and when you are going to do it. This brings certainty, and helps you bring a's feel a greater sense of control or influence. We know we cannot control the virus but we know that we can control our response to it. So an example on the slide, for example, we have scheduling a family meeting to talk to my kids and family about health and safety practices. Number two, demonstrate and practice health and safety

practices with my kids. Break it down to their level, here's how you wash your hands, sing the happy birthday song twice, in order to make sure you wash your hands right. Here's how we say, no, I cannot get together with you because we are doing social distancing. Okay? Here is what 6 feet looks like, get out the yardstick or tape measure or whatever. This is what 6 feet looks like so they have a tangible sense of what we are talking about here. Okay? So after you do that rate the level of fear that you have in the situation now that you have a plan. Remember, information and having a plan reduces anxiety. Use the 1 to 10 scale again, where 1 is slightly worried and 10 is very worried. So notice, how did your level of worry change after you developed a plan? Did it go down a little bit? Did it go down a fair amount? Okay, I do not think that we will get to a 1 or even a 0 here, but we want to give you a greater sense of how your ability to manage your anxiety, to reduce your anxiety by creating the plan based on your list of worry items. Okay? Now is there anything you have noticed about yourself and your style as you completed this activity? What did you learn as we went through everything about analyzing the situation and evaluating the accuracy of your thoughts and improving upon what you can control. What did you learn there? Now if your level of worry did not come down, what can you do? I recommend that you use a simplified version of what we call the downward arrow technique. For the worry that is still too high, ask yourself,

Remember anxiety is a process in search of content. It is a busy brain that is scanning for threats and risks all the time. Busy, busy, busy. Way back before there were psychologists and therapist, before Prozac and Xanax, people were using repeated words and phrases, what we call, mantras, to calm their nervous system and soothe themselves. They can have a spiritual tone about them because virtually every faith tradition around the world has some sort of chant or mantra, and there is an intuitive wisdom here that says our brain likes to be busy, they like to get stuck, but give them something to think about. Okay? This is thought redirection. You taken overactive brain and send it down the road that is soothing or inspiring or will build your perseverance and determination. So, take a minute now and think of a Let's give your brain something to work on. That is better. The first one is this too shall pass. The second one, just for today. One data time. Number three. It will get better. Number four, this is a moment of suffering. And there is a longer version of that. This is a moment of suffering, suffering is a part of life. May I be kind to myself in this moment. May I give myself and others the compassion we all need right now. The fifth one is, may my work be of benefit to others. Number six, just breathing in, and breathing out. Just breathing in, and breathing out. Number seven is let it go, now for those of you who have kids, you may be hearing the lyrics to the song that Elsa seems in "frozen". But there is a lot in just let it go. Number eight is, I can handle this. I can handle this. And number nine is, I am enough. I am enough. Keep in mind, information plus having a plan reduces anxiety. So, we have been discussing steps that you can take to decrease her worry. But what if you know someone who is a chronic worrier or who has diagnosable issues with anxiety, or you think they might? Let's take a look at that.

It is very important that during this time we take care of ourselves, but also that we have methods and skills for supporting others. So, chronic worrying and/or anxiety, can put a strain on someone's health, and on relationships. Maybe you noticed that you are a little more crabby or snappy with people here and there. The symptoms can make it difficult for someone to function day to day. So here are some suggestions for helping people cope. Part of it you are already doing, you are educating yourself. As you educate yourself about chronic worry and anxiety, that helps you to understand what is happening and to know better how to respond. And, secondly, if you know somebody has irrational fears, it is often our first instinct to try to get the person to realize that their thoughts are irrational and when we do that, we may unintentionally criticize them. The criticism, or perceived criticism, can actually make things worse. So, what is better? Focus on and comment on the positive changes you notice. Encourage them to practice a process similar to ones that we have shared with you today. These two main ideas, don't believe everything that you think and feelings are real, but not true. Always build compassion and kindness when someone is suffering or struggling. And when they do something well, and they will, notice it and comment on it. Like, I liked the way that you talked back there, I like that you stepped back and took yourself away from that thing that was stressing you out. I like that you are reaching out and getting help. That sort of thing. Okay? Now, it is also important that when you measure success, do not compare. Okay? The thing about comparison is when you compare yourself to others, that is a game you always lose. What is better, is to compare yourself with how you did yesterday or last week. And, don't compare your struggle with theirs, or their struggle with someone else's. Everyone's experience is unique, so just leave the comparison thing on the side of the road. Okay? Now, it is also a good idea to help them maybe set realistic goals. You have a chance to set goals for yourself today, back when we talked about worries and how to lower your stress level. You may even help your friend or family member set up realistic goals for themselves, in terms of dealing with their anxiety and practicing real world, practical self-care. And next, ask how you can help, please don't assume you know what the person needs. Ask them. How can I help you right now? What would you like from me, what do you need from me right now? Okay? And, of course, encourage your Pham -- family member or friend to reach out if needed. And express with them the pros of getting help. Some are still reluctant of getting help but we are social creatures and one of the major parts of resilience and the ability to endure adversity, is making sure that we are connected. That we are getting help. It does not have to be from a professional, although certainly I recommend that. But reach out to get some help, maybe talk to the doctor or if you have a therapist, or a pastor or spiritual leader or a good friend. Encourage the person to reach out, connect, and ask for help. We talked about some of the warning signs earlier. And, there are a lot of different ways to get some help, including if there is a member of your family or household, through your company's or organization's assistance program. Okay so that brings us to our conclusion here. This is a hard time. There is no avoiding that. But we are tossed. We are resilient. And we are strong. This program is here to remind you of that. And to help you deepen it and feel a more permanent and concrete sense of your ability to not

only get through this, but also to help those you care about get through this in the best possible shape. Take the information that I have shared with you and modify it. Make it your own. Fix it, so that it works better for you. It has been my pleasure, and my privilege to share this information with you.

And we are all truly going to get through this together. So, thank you very much for your time and attention. For all that you are doing to take care of yourself, to help others and make the world a better place. On the half of Magellan Healthcare, this is Art Maines, wishing you peace, well-being, and a better world.

[Event concluded]