"...As I spent the next 20 minutes frozen in that position, I felt my knees involuntarily shaking in the darkness as Gerow guided our collective breathing and coached us through the experience. Turns out, those warm-ups were hardly rote at all—they were part of a carefully organized sequence known as Tension and Trauma Release Exercises (TRE), which claims to relieve muscle pain through a physiological process called neurogenic tremoring. Yes, you read that right—tremoring.

Unlike the wellness crazes that popped up every few months pre-COVID—“lymphatic drainage” trampoline classes, aerial yoga, indoor surfing—TRE sessions have been slowly gaining momentum in recent years without ever becoming trendy, remaining something of an insider secret. The exercise specifically focuses on releasing tension in the psoas, a large muscle running from the femur through the pelvic bowl that holistic experts have long believed seizes up in response to physical, emotional, and mental distress. “When our psoas is tight, you can feel it in your back and maybe you hunch over,” Gerow says. “Over time, if we keep carrying our traumas, the body will break down. We gain weight; we won’t sleep; we can’t let go; we aren’t creative.”

The class marked the first time I was able to stop thinking about the 50 things I had to do that week and truly feel the relaxation I sought at the resort that weekend. Still, Gerow advises that TRE is “not a panacea” or a one-and-done cure-all for physical and emotional discomfort. “This is a process,” he says. “And as we go into 2021, I think people are really going to seek out ways to deal with everything we went through collectively in 2020.”

Support groups in KZN

Support Group
Leader & CPD Workshop

Support Group Leaders trained

59

28

2

12

Support groups in KZN

Direct people reached in community intervention programmes

79+

International mental health engagements

11

Corporate wellness events

9

Monthly newsletters & 1 special COVID edition

9

Direct people reached with our mental health awareness events

600+

Radio, TV & Newspaper Interviews

20+
Support group leader workshops
Growing active support groups in KZN
Free Community Forum Talks
CPD Workshops
Youth community intervention programmes
Research projects
Mental health talks, workshops & presentations
Mental health awareness events
International mental health engagements
Corporate wellness events
Monthly newsletters
Radio, TV & Newspaper interviews

FEB
11-18 Teen Suicide Prevention Week

MAY
24 World Schizophrenia Day
17 International Day against Homophobia

JUN
16 Youth Day
20 World Refugee Day

MAR
8 International Women’s Day
30 International Bipolar Awareness Day

APR
2 World Autism Day
7 World Health Day

JUL
Annual Mental Health Symposium
10 Panic Awareness Day

AUG
9 National Women’s Day
12 International Youth Day

SEP
10 World Suicide Prevention Day
21 World Alzheimer’s Day

OCT
Annual Mental Health Walk

NOV
3 World Kindness Day Disability Awareness Month (Begins)
25 16 Days of Activism against gender-violence (Begins)

DEC
5 International Volunteers Day
The first 6 months of our Mental Health and Gender Initiative (MHaGI) have flown by but we have had an incredibly successful start to our project. On January 30, we submitted our first evaluation report to Gender Links, who is coordinating the Women’s Voice and Leadership South Africa (WVL-SA) grant, and we are eagerly awaiting our next tranche payment.

In 2020, our main achievements were:

- Developing and designing a Needs Analysis and Research Proposal in collaboration with the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Psychology Department, with Dr Ruwayda Petrus
- Setting up the KZN Gender and Mental Health Task Team, which includes various collaborative organisations.
- Supporting the Tumaini Community Project by facilitating 3 workshops for refugee youth and contributing towards their homework centre initiative and buying school supplies for the children.
- Setting up and facilitating 8 workshops for the Refugee Women’s Sewing Group. This has set the foundation for a Women’s Psychosocial Support Group and small business enterprise, and has been generously facilitated by Sandy Kalyan, a dedicated SADAG volunteer and retired clinical psychologist.
- Hosting four Community Forum presentations and awareness initiatives for the general public, including the Durban Mental Health Symposium, with a focus on including the voices and stories of women.

Our plans for 2021 include:

- Setting up Mental Health Support Groups across all 10 districts in KZN
- Setting up an LGBTI+ mental health initiative – including a support group and awareness campaign
- Supporting the Mums Support Network, a non-profit organisation, to raise awareness about perinatal distress
- Continuing to support the refugee community in Durban with a range of mental health projects, including partnership with the Flatfoot Dance Company
- Hosting ‘Mental Health Champions’ training later in the year for community activists If you would like to get involved and support the MHaGI in any way, please contact us for further information.
**NB Dates**

14-21 Teen Suicide Prevention week  
12 World Epilepsy week  
17 Random Act of Kindness Day  
20 World Day of Social Justice

**Take Note**

Make a note in your diary for our upcoming Community Forum this month:

**COVID-19 and Complicated Grief**  
Friday, 26 Feb  
13.00 to 14.00pm  
*RSVP details to follow*

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**Volunteering**

Volunteering Fridays are running again this year. JOIN US for our next "lunch time" session on:

**Friday, 19 Feb**  
13.00 to 14.00pm  
*RSVP details to follow  
Email mentalhealthmatters3@gmail.com for more info*

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**Support Group Leader Training**

By Suntosh Pillay and Lynn Norton

**FREE ONLINE TRAINING**

**Thursday, 25 February 2021**  
09:00 - 12:00  

Apply before 12 February 2021.  

Limited spaces available

KZN5ADAG@ANXIETY.ORG.ZA | 078 278 7047

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**A Virtual Support Group Leaders Forum & Upskilling Session**

**Support Groups for the New Decade.**  
Facilitated by Suntosh Pillay  
Clinical Psychologist  

**Wednesday, 17 February 2021**  
16:30 - 17:30  

RSVP before 16 February 2021.  

All login details will be sent to registered attendees ahead of time.

KZN5ADAG@ANXIETY.ORG.ZA | 078 278 7047
What motivated you to become a support group leader?
I founded Mums Support Network just over 4 years ago. I had suffered from perinatal distress (PND) and from my own experiences I realized that many mothers do not have a safe space in which to share their true feelings. There were no PND support groups in my area, so I decided to start one myself.

What are you especially proud of?
We have walked with women through their darkest days of PND, and because of the support they received from us, were able to come out alive on the other side. To have saved a mother and child, and to have been able to keep a family from such a tragedy, is a feeling beyond words.

Do you use virtual groups as well?
We realised that there were mothers and mothers-to-be who wanted to attend our meetings but were unable to, so we set up a WhatsApp group. It is a group where mums can connect at any time of the day or night (because there is always someone else awake at 3AM!) and find support wherever they are. From a funny parenting meme to coping skills for anxiety, it’s like having a support group in your pocket! The group became so popular and busy that we had to break it up into smaller regional groups.

How do you increase awareness about perinatal distress?
We realised how misunderstood perinatal distress is, even by medical professionals. Together with Lauren Shapiro and Hayls Lieberthal we decided that we would try to do talks around the topic of PND and the challenges of modern motherhood. Not the usual facts from the textbooks, but rather from our own raw and real experiences.

What advice do you have for new support group leaders?
If no one attends, don’t give up. There are people out there who need your group, they just may not know about it yet. Keep setting that time aside for a meeting, keep showing up, and eventually word WILL get around.
10 WAYS TO PROCESS GRIEF AFTER DEATH DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

"COVID-19 has obstructed the vital usual manner of being present with a dying loved one—at their bedside, holding their hand and speaking comforting words"

Karen Anderson, Edith Cowan University Lecturer and Psychotherapist

"The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted our experiences of, and our rituals associated with dying, death and bereavement. Edith Cowan University Lecturer and Psychotherapist Karen Anderson has used key research and her own observations working on the frontline of counseling to explain the impact of this pandemic on the grief process, and how we can better manage our grief when the usual rites of passage are not possible. Karen Anderson’s advice on coping with grief during COVID-19:

1. Remember that grief is a highly personal experience unique to your own self. People grieve in a variety of ways and there is no right or wrong way to grieve.
2. Grief by its nature is reflective and isolating. It can be a lonely experience. You are not alone because of your grief only but due to a broader reality impacted by COVID-19 and physical distancing.
3. Do give yourself permission to experience the range of thoughts and feelings that you have whilst always taking care to stay safe. Use rituals that are meaningful to you (it may be to light a candle, to browse through photos, to buy a plant in honour for your loved one).
4. Recognise that grief will dominate your emotions and thoughts during the early weeks and months. Grief is a process that takes time to adapt and integrate into your life. Most people learn to cope with and manage their grief as they go about their daily lives.
5. Grief is not a mental health issue but it may become one if it's not acknowledged and addressed. Take additional care during this period of COVID-19 to look after yourself emotionally, mentally and physically. Maintain good health—daily exercise, normal sleep patterns, eat healthy meals even if you eat less, stay hydrated and limit alcohol use.
6. Allow yourself to receive care and support offered by others, albeit this may come through different ways than usual—meals, pot plants, flowers candles etc. left at your door, letters, notes and cards in your letterbox, social media, telephone and text messages.
7. Ask for help and reach out to others when you need to. Stay connected with others as regularly as you can.
8. Try to stick with your regular routine as much as is possible—getting up and going to bed at the same time is helpful.
9. Do not indulge feeling guilty about a funeral which may not have been as your loved one or you wanted. These COVID-19 influenced times are abnormal times and hence the type of funeral has been dictated by a much broader public health necessity.
10. Stay focused on what is important to you – your own loss and grief. Limit the amount of news and social media you use. News involving constant distressing updates can be difficult when you are feeling sad.

Finally, take care, step gently and have kind consideration of, and for yourself as you grieve the loss of your loved one in a respectful and meaningful way."

SADAG Social media + Helplines
Facebook: "Ask the expert" chat @TheSADAG
Online chats: www.sadag.org
Tel: 0800 21 22 23
24/7 helpline: 0800 456 789
24/7 Suicide Line: 0800 567 567
Sms: 32312

COVID-19 National Contacts
Toll-free helpline: 0800 029 999
Website: www.sacoronavirus.co.za
Whatsapp: 0600 123456

Department of Social Development
Substance Abuse Line 24hr helpline
Tel: 0800 12 13 14
SMS: 32312

Narcotics Anonymous KZN
Helpline: 086 100 6962
WhatsApp: 079 592 2294

Alcoholics Anonymous South Africa
www.aasouthafrica.org.za
Tel: 031 301 4959 / 301 9830
24/7 helpline: 0861 435 722

Safer Spaces National Safety Services
www.saferspaces.org.za/safety-services

Gender Based Violence Helplines
24/7 helpline: 0800 428 428 / 0800 150 150
Call back: *120*7867#
Tears GBV SMS: *134*7355#

MobieG Counseling for Teens
www.mobieg.co.za

Childline
24/7 crisis line: 0800 555 555