

SEPTEMBER 2021

# RUTGERS WORLD TRADE CENTER HEALTH PROGRAM

*E-NEWSLETTER FROM THE DESKS OF  
WTC MEDICAL DIRECTOR, IRIS UDASIN, M.D.  
AND MENTAL HEALTH DIRECTOR, JODI STREICH, PH.D.*

Hello Everyone!

We want to let you know that we remain committed to your ongoing care and have continued to meet with our patients face-to-face and via telehealth. Now is a great time to schedule your annual monitoring exam, which can be done in-person or via telehealth.

**This E-Newsletter is a special edition.** September 11, 2021 marks the milestone of the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. We want you to know that we never forgot.

Your selfless commitment to the rescue, recovery, and relief efforts and all you have sacrificed will never be forgotten. To honor the almost 3000 people who lost their lives that day, and all of you, our responders that rushed in without hesitation to help on that day and in the aftermath, we are organizing an event on-campus on Friday, September 10, 2021. On behalf of the entire Rutgers community, we thank you for your selfless contributions and service. Your presence will be an extraordinary part of the healing process for all of us, and, we are truly honored to have you as our New Jersey Heroes!

Please join us as we come together as a community to remember those we have lost, and to honor you and your family.

## Details:

Date: 9.10.21

Time: 9:30am

Livestream: <https://livestream.com/rutgersity/91120th>

Staying socially connected is key. At a time when connectedness has been difficult beyond our imagination and our physical health has been challenged, we must also remember to take care of our mental health. Our mental health department is proud to continue to offer you our virtual mental health programs with a special focus on the 20th Anniversary year.



*From Left to Right:  
Ruth Lin, MD., Jodi Streich, Ph.D.,  
Iris Udasin, MD., Linda Christiansen, R.N.*

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SEPTEMBER 2021

**PLEASE JOIN US!**

*20 Years  
of  
Healing  
Our 9/11  
Heroes*



**September 10, 2021**

20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration  
Rutgers President's Tent  
College Avenue, New Brunswick  
9:30 AM

**RUTGERS**

Environmental and Occupational  
Health Sciences Institute | EOHSI

## ***MENTAL HEALTH: IT IMPACTS EVERYONE***

We all have mental health, so we need to take care of our minds as we do our bodies. Many of us seek a medical professional's help when we experience pain in our body. However, an average of 6 to 8 years passes before many people reach out for help with a mental health challenge. Seeking treatment and support groups can promote healthy living – it is time to stop the stigma.

### ***WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?***

Many of us have experienced these symptoms at some point in our lives:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Low mood</li><li>▪ Anxiety</li><li>▪ Increased irritability</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Lack of motivation</li><li>▪ Poor sleep</li><li>▪ Avoiding others / isolating</li></ul> |
|---|---|

### ***WTC HEALTH PROGRAM IS HERE TO HELP***

<b>Annual Monitoring</b>	<b>Individual Therapy</b>	<b>Groups</b>
We provide mental health screening and monitoring on an annual basis for our patients.	Our highly trained team offers the best care either in person or virtually.	We offer a variety of therapeutic and skills based virtual groups. This is a non-judgmental, safe space where you can receive support from your peers.

*Please reach out, we are here for you.*

## 2021 FALL VIRTUAL GROUPS!

The WTC Mental Health team at Rutgers University will continue to offer a variety of virtual groups where you can connect, support one another, and learn new skills to promote well-being across a variety of life domains including - relationships, life transitions, physical health concerns, stress and mindfulness.

**NEW**



### 20 YEARS LATER: 9/11 SUPPORT GROUPS

Individuals can collectively share their unique experiences with the support of their peers in a safe, therapeutic environment. These process groups will be held once a week.

#### WHO IS THIS FOR?

Anyone who is interested in receiving additional support around the 20-year anniversary of 9.11. We have launched new groups and are offering four different times slots throughout the 20th anniversary year. This group is an OPEN group. New members will be welcome to join these groups all year long.

### 9/11-RELATED CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

This group provides a safe, therapeutic setting, where first responders can process their experiences with cancer amongst peers who have undergone similar health issues. It is a peer support group led by trained facilitators with a focus on sharing coping strategies, relating personal experiences and processing life changes due to a cancer diagnosis. Group sessions are offered through a secure video platform, once a week for 75 mins.

#### WHO IS THIS FOR?

Anyone who has been diagnosed with a 9/11-related cancer and is interested in receiving support around this diagnosis (even if you are in remission).

### PEER SUPPORT GROUP

This group aims to provide support around life changes related to transitions such as retirement and other personal changes. It is a peer support group led by trained facilitators with a focus on sharing coping strategies, relating personal experiences of grief and loss, and building a sense of community. Group sessions will be held through a secure video platform once a week for 60 minutes.

#### WHO IS THIS FOR?

Anyone who is interested in receiving support around life changes, adjustment, and transitions.



**PROJECT UPLIFT**

This is a program that teaches mental health skills along with mindfulness and meditation skills to help members cope with increased stress, anxiety, depression, or chronic health problems. You will learn information, practice activities, and engage in peer support. Group sessions will be held by phone, once a week for 60 minutes. This program runs for 8 consecutive weeks.

**WHO IS THIS FOR?**

Anyone who is experiencing increased stress, anxiety, depression, or chronic health problems and is interested in learning new coping skills.

**WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP**

This group is aimed at helping members increase resilience, confidence, empowerment and improving self-understanding through the power of interpersonal relationships. The goal is to create a vision to guide you and strengthen your sense of self, and, to develop effective coping strategies through open discussions and group feedback.

**WHO IS THIS FOR?**

Female first responders.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS GROUP**

This group focuses on enhancing overall well-being. Topics include managing stress, maintaining good physical health, improving communication skills, sleep hygiene, nutrition, social supports, and better understanding the mind/body connection. This group meets weekly for 90 minutes.

**WHO IS THIS FOR?**

Anyone and everyone!

**CHRONIC ILLNESS SUPPORT GROUP**

Whether you have been living with a chronic illness, or, this is the first time getting a diagnosis, it is always important to have a support system. In this chronic illness support group, our goals are to have you experience emotional healing through sharing your life experience and learning from others going through the same issues. This group will be led by two co-facilitators and will meet on a weekly basis for ten weeks.

**WHO IS THIS FOR?**

Do you have a chronic illness? Are you looking for support and guidance for your chronic illness? Are you ready to explore your mental health that is related to your physical condition?

If you answered yes, this group is for you.

**COPLES' WORKSHOP**

The Couples Workshop will be led by two trained facilitators. It aims to provide skills and support for you and your partner and will focus on topics such as improving communication, managing stress and increasing fun and play! The workshop consists of 4 sessions, which will be offered through a secure video platform once a week for 2 hours. Both individuals must be willing to participate.

**WHO IS THIS FOR?**

Anyone interested in forming and maintaining a better relationship with their partner!





## MEDITATION

Meditation is considered a type of mind-body complementary medicine. Meditation can produce a deep state of relaxation and a tranquil mind. During meditation, you focus your attention and eliminate the stream of jumbled thoughts that may be crowding your mind and causing stress. This process may result in enhanced physical and emotional well-being. Meditation can help carry you more calmly through your day and may help you manage symptoms of certain medical conditions. This group is ongoing, so it is not mandatory to attend every session.

## INSTRUCTOR BIO

*Joseph Caputo (Duhk Song Sunim) is a seasoned Zen Monk, director of Soshimsa Zen Centers 1000 Hands Outreach Program and a participating active member of the WTC Health Program. He is currently teaching weekly Zen, Mindfulness, and Relaxation methods of meditation at WTC Health Program. The program trains its participant to utilize these meditation techniques as tools for health and overall well-being of mind, body, and spirit.*

*Duhk Song Sunim has been actively teaching meditation and Healing Arts throughout New Jersey for over a decade. He favors a practical approach to teaching with emphasis on experience over academic knowledge. By making his instructions easily understood, class participants are able immediately begin to benefit from their newly gained knowledge.*

## QI GONG

Qigong (pronounced “CHI- GUNG”) is the healing power of the combination of breath awareness, body alignment, meditative movements and self-massage. In qigong practices, we move the body’s energy (Qi or chi) and replace stagnant Qi with coordination of breath with the movements and intent. These practices have been proven to improve medical, emotional and spiritual health. In Chinese philosophy, it’s considered a method of building and balancing life energy through exercise. This is a weekly class available to anyone at any time!

## INSTRUCTOR BIO

*Bob Lavin is a Retired firefighter from the Elizabeth, NJ Fire Department. He is a cancer survivor and patient of WTC Health at Rutgers*

*Having been diagnosed with PTSD from a lifetime of personal trauma, Bob was drawn to Qi Gong for therapy. He received so many blessings from qigong practice for the past 7 years and is inspired to give back through sharing his practice with others. He became an HQTC certified Integral Qigong Practice Leader in April of 2019.*

If you are interested in attending any of these groups, please email: [wtchp-help@ehsi.rutgers.edu](mailto:wtchp-help@ehsi.rutgers.edu)



## ***Risk Factors for Mental Health Conditions Among World Trade Center Law Enforcement Responders***

Twenty years ago, the lives of Americans were forever changed when planes crashed into the World Trade Center (WTC), the Pentagon and Shanksville, PA. On September 11, 2001, and the ensuing months, law enforcement personnel assisted in the rescue and recovery efforts following the attacks. For many of the individuals who were exposed to the 9/11 events, their physical and mental health were impacted during these efforts. As a result, the WTC Health Program was established to provide health services to these individuals. Under the WTC Health Program, the WTC General Responders Cohort was established to provide health services for general responders who assisted in the rescue and recovery efforts. Included in these general responders are law enforcement responders.

In the years following the attacks, law enforcement responders were exhibiting symptoms of multiple mental health conditions related to the WTC attacks including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and alcohol use disorder. Although it has been twenty years, these conditions are continuing to impact the lives of these law enforcement responders today; therefore, it is crucial that we are able to recognize who among this group is most at risk for developing a mental health condition and ensuring that these responders have access to and are utilizing the mental health services needed to address these conditions.

Recently, an analysis was conducted on data collected from WTC law enforcement responders enrolled in the WTC Health Program who attended an initial visit at the Rutgers Clinical Center of Excellence. The purpose of this analysis was to identify any participant characteristics that were potentially associated with screening positive for a mental health condition and receiving a mental health services referral.

It was found that having a diagnosis of a mental health condition prior to 9/11 significantly increased the odds of a WTC law enforcement responder screening positive for a mental health condition and receiving a mental health services referral during their initial visit to the clinic. This indicates that among WTC law enforcement personnel, having a mental health condition prior to 9/11 is a potential risk factor for a future mental health condition diagnosis.

Although it has been twenty years since the 9/11 attacks, the mental health of WTC law enforcement responders is still being impacted today. As time passes and potential risk factors change, it is important that we continue to identify these risk factors and address the needs of WTC law enforcement responders by providing access to necessary health care services and ensuring that these services are being utilized.

*Samantha Metlitz, MPH*

## **UPCOMING 9/11 EVENTS IN THE NYC AREA**

### **NATIONAL SEPTEMBER 11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM**

The heart of the mission of the **National September 11 Memorial & Museum** remains the annual commemoration ceremony. Family members of 9/11 victims will gather on the Memorial plaza to read aloud the names of those killed in the 9/11 attacks and in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

The National September 11 Memorial & Museum will soon lead the nation, and the world, as we mark the passage of two decades since the day that changed our lives forever.

The focus of our commemoration will be the reading of the names by family members in-person. Throughout the ceremony, the 9/11 Memorial & Museum will observe six moments of silence, acknowledging when each of the World Trade Center towers was struck and fell and the times corresponding to the attack on the Pentagon and the crash of Flight 93.

The program will commence at 8:30 a.m., and the first moment of silence will be observed at 8:46 a.m. The 9/11 Memorial & Museum will encourage houses of worship to toll their bells at that time. The ceremony will be exclusively for 9/11 family members. Access to the Memorial will begin at 7:00 a.m. on the anniversary, and the commemoration is expected to conclude at approximately 1:00 p.m. <https://www.911memorial.org/>

### **TRIBUTE IN LIGHT RETURNS SEPTEMBER 11, 2021, TO RISE INTO THE NEW YORK CITY SKY**

In remembrance of the many lives lost on September 11, 2001, the Tribute in Light will shine into the skies above the city this year 20 years after that fateful day. The twin beams can be seen for miles and miles from its epicenter in lower Manhattan. They will light up beginning at sunset and fade away the next morning at dawn.

As has been the case in years past, the 9/11 memorial will be closed during the earlier part of the day for the Commemoration Ceremony which will not be open to the public. It will reopen for everyone beginning at 3:00 pm and will close again at midnight.

Keep in mind that the lights do not emanate from a location accessible to the public. You merely need to have an unobstructed view of the skies over lower Manhattan to be able to see them.

## **UPCOMING 9/11 EVENTS IN THE NYC AREA**

**COURTESY OF THE 9/11 MEMORIAL MUSEUM'S RECENT NEWSLETTER:**

"As an extension of Tribute in Light, for the 20th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, attacks, the 9/11 Memorial & Museum has once again partnered with NYC & Company and buildings throughout the city to light up their facades and rooftops in sky blue. "Tribute in Lights" is a unique, but simple gesture of collective remembrance that will illuminate the city on the evening of the anniversary.

Current participants include New York City Hall, the Empire State Building, Bloomberg, L.P., the Perelman Performing Arts Center, the Times Square Ball and more. For a complete list of all those participating in the Tribute in Lights, please visit [www.911memorial.org/tributeinlight](http://www.911memorial.org/tributeinlight)."

The twin lights represent the original Twin Towers. Each Beam is comprised of 88 refrigerator-sized 7,000-watt xenon searchlights positioned in two 48-foot squares that echo the shape and orientation of the twin towers.

### **2021 5K RUN & WALK - NEW YORK CITY, NY - CAMPAIGN (T2T.ORG)**

Sept 26 9:30am-2pm – 1 Beard Street Brooklyn – Run. Walk. Honor.

The Tunnel to Towers 5K Run & Walk in New York is held, each year, on the last Sunday of September. (Sept 26, 2021) What began with 1,500 people in 2002 is now considered by many to be one of the top 5K runs in America.

The event symbolizes Stephen Siller's final footsteps from the foot of the Battery Tunnel to the Twin Towers and pays homage to the 343 FDNY firefighters, 71 law enforcement officers, and thousands of civilians who lost their lives on September 11, 2001.

Proceeds from the event support the Foundation's programs, including those benefitting first responders, and catastrophically injured service members. "While we have time, Let us do Good".

SEPTEMBER 2021

## **NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH**

September is National Suicide Prevention Month. All month, our mental health advocates, prevention organizations, survivors, allies, and community members unite to promote suicide prevention awareness.

