

CARTHA Intergenerational Dialogue on Healthy Coping Skills / Grieving

Agenda and General Sequence for April 25, 2026

- 10:15am Meet and greet attendees as they arrive and sign in.
- 10:30am Room becomes available and everyone gets seated.
- 10:35am Usha sings *Nalandaanaa* song, *Are you well on the inside and out?*  
Usha makes introductory remarks (see attached script)
- 10:40am Reading out loud: Goals of CARTHA Dialogue Series on Caregiving, Coping Skills & Intergenerational Resilience

**1. Sophia Singh**

- To give voice to informal caregivers whose perspectives and experiences are crucial to understanding the complete context within which pain and suffering are managed in our society, culture, and households.

**2. Amy Anil**

- To highlight the need for informal community networks that can complement the work of formal medical and public health infrastructure in resolving challenges such as loneliness, grief, and loss.

**3. JJ Kapur**

- To help recognize the timely partners and resources which may (or may not) be available to support informal caregivers.

**4. Cecelia Douglas**

- To discuss and plan relevant action steps to support informal caregivers in our community so that these caregivers and their families can maintain and build good health and resilience over the short and/or long term.

**5. Judy Leavitt**

- To gather caregiver narratives which can offer insights into the daily struggles, challenges, as well as simple joys, humor, and irritations involving short-term or longer-term caregiving roles.

- 10:45 am Speakers introduce themselves for 2 minutes each (Name, affiliation/career/passion, why/how you are interested in this topic, what is your coping skill, what have you experienced or worked on most recently?) *\*In case you are a speaker leaving early, please tell us what question you have for the experts in the room to help with!*
1. **Rahul Rastogi**
  2. **\*Amy Anil (will leave at 11 am)**
  3. **\*Sophia Singh (will leave early)**
  4. **\*JJ Kapur (will leave early)**
  5. **Chris Klug**
  6. **Judy Leavitt**
- 11:15 am Usha asks several questions (to motivate a free-flowing discussion with each speaker) about Healthy Coping Skills with a particular focus on self-care and caregiving in the context of grieving and the pain of grief. *Why make such dialogues intergenerational?* Speaker shares from personal experience and/or professional expertise, research studies outlining current challenges and opportunities.
1. **Rahul Rastogi**
  2. **JJ Kapur (will leave early)**
  3. **Chris Klug**
  4. **Judy Leavitt**
- 12 noon CARTHA Board Members (Usha, Judy Leavitt, Nancy Halder)  
Intro of CARTHA *Nimma Resilience Fellows*-Each will have 3 mins total to speak, tell a story, read a poem, and/or play an instrument
1. **Joshua Musonda** (The Power of Oral Storytelling)
  2. **Suhani Nagarajan** (plays the violin)
  3. **Will Ode** (With guitar, sings We Shall Overcome w Usha)
  4. **John Galvez** (plays the trombone)
- 12:15 pm Audience Q&A and Interaction
- 12:45 pm Closing Comments – Speakers – please provide a quick 1-minute suggestion on how to add to coping toolbox
- Announce date of next dialogue: Saturday, September 19, 2026
- 12:55 pm Please walk over to New Pi to grab some lunch-we can talk more!

## Usha Balakrishnan's Introductory Remarks on April 25, 2026

Good Morning, Friends! My name is Usha Balakrishnan. As many of you know, I love people. And, I want people (including myself!) to feel mutually empowered through collaboration--to fulfill our individual and collective aspirations for humanity. That's why I founded my nonprofit CARTHA 20 years ago.

CARTHA is a non-religious, non-political US 501c3 tax-exempt public charity with the educational mission of Cultivating Collaborative Doers for Humanity. Focused on Social Innovation, Healthfulness, and Fusion Philanthropy, our intergenerational volunteer teams design and support Glocalizer dialogues and Fellowships, program incubation partnerships, and philanthropic models that bridge high-aspiration innovators across disciplines, sectors, regions, and ages. Although not an arts organization, we have a unique interest in promoting healing through musicality.

Over forty years ago, at age 20, I arrived in the United States as a young bride. At that time, singing and poetry writing were my coping skills. I had zero contacts then. So, friendship-making became imperative. Today, my life is joyously filled with lots of BFFs, Best Friends Forever!

Our intergenerational dialogue today is around Healthy Coping Skills with a particular focus on self-care and caregiving in the context of grieving and the pain of grief. Why make it intergenerational? Because I think we can learn from younger people's perspectives while also sharing our own experiences with younger people—in the hopes that healthier coping skills can develop at all ages, at any age, and many varieties of “communal coping skills” can set in for a better preparedness.

Among all the things I've worked on and experienced in my life, this thing called Grief has been the toughest. Oddly enough, what rendered most comfort in my grieving moments were stunning episodes of serendipity and synchronicity with random strangers, some of whom are in this room today. They are strangers to me no more: Exhibit A: Judy Leavitt; Exhibit B: Joshua Musonda; Exhibit C: Will Ode. And this list goes on and on.

My local friend, Rich Stapleton, who currently serves as the Chairman of the Board of the National Board of Certified Counselors, could not be here today. However, he sent me the following message: “It gives me a lot of pride coming from a community (like the Iowa City area) with such strong advocacy groups for mental health services. Grief is something that everyone in their lifetime either has or will experience. We all need to add to our coping toolbox and I love that CARTHA is addressing this (need).”

For challenges in professional and personal contexts, I always seek out kindred spirits with whom I can have a meaningful conversation. That makes most of you my kindred spirits for today, right? I thank you all for being here! I want to learn and share with you in ways that make good things happen from the tacit wisdom, goodness, and humor that resides in each and every one of us.

The first hour of our program is for our speakers, after which we will briefly introduce our 2026 Nimma Resilience Fellows. There will be musical interludes to lighten and brighten our moods so that this dialogue does not turn out to be too somber. The last half-hour is reserved for a Q&A with the audience. Shortly before 1 pm, whoever is free, please walk over with us to New Pioneer Co-op across the street, and grab some lunch so that we can continue one-on-one discussions.

Today's topic is a heavy one for me, as it may well be for you too. So, as we begin, may I ask that you close your eyes and breathe in and out deeply while thinking of a beautiful memory in a fragrant garden? *Usha sings La Le Lu nur der Mann.....*

That was a lullaby taught to me by my German cousin, Nicole Guruswami, who died 50 years ago in a tragic glider accident while she was a college student in France.

Let me be the first one to admit that I am no expert in either the theory or the practice of any of the topics we're discussing today. However, what I have done is to seek out some experts who can enlighten us on different facets of these topics. What I have also done is to develop the goals for the CARTHA Dialogue Series on Caregivers, Coping Skills, and Intergenerational Resilience. I have requested 5 volunteers to read out these 5 Goals:

6. **Sophia Singh:** To give voice to informal caregivers whose perspectives and experiences are crucial to understanding the complete context within which pain and suffering are managed in our society, culture, and households.
7. **Amy Anil:** To highlight the need for informal community networks that can complement the work of formal medical and public health infrastructure in resolving challenges such as loneliness, grief, and loss.
8. **JJ Kapur:** To help recognize the timely partners and resources which may (or may not) be available to support informal caregivers.
9. **Cecelia Douglas:** To discuss and plan relevant action steps to support informal caregivers in our community so that these caregivers and their families can maintain and build good health and resilience over the short and/or long term.
10. **Judy Leavitt:** To gather caregiver narratives which can offer insights into the daily struggles, challenges, as well as simple joys, humor, and irritations involving short-term or longer-term caregiving roles.

Thank you for that reading. Now, we move on to introductions of the Speakers.