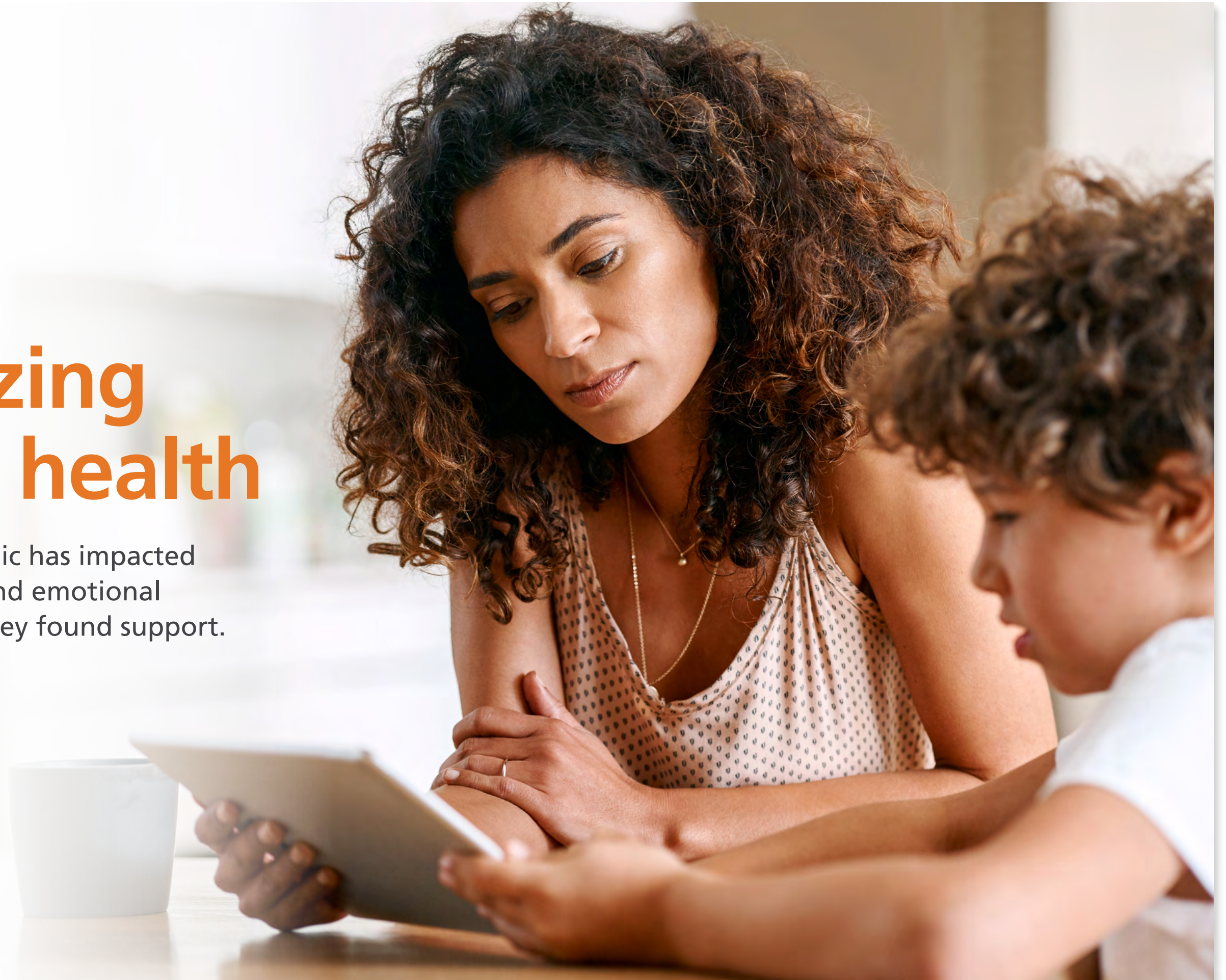




# Prioritizing mental health

See how the pandemic has impacted employees' mental and emotional health — and how they found support.



# The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted mental health in unprecedented ways.

This **ebook** outlines how the pandemic has affected mental health needs such as substance use, anxiety and depression. Read on to hear stories about employees' experiences and how they found the support they needed.



## Section 1

### Overcoming substance use during a pandemic

See how Peter received support for alcoholism.



## Section 2

### Secondary stress of frontline workers

See how Maria coped with PTSD after being hospitalized for COVID-19.



## Section 3

### Addressing family mental health

See how Jamie found support for family and financial stress.

## Overcoming substance use during a pandemic

Alcohol use has increased as Americans are coping with the stress of the pandemic.

Core substance use needs:

- Help managing stress and anxiety
- Psychiatric support
- Virtual clinical support
- Substance use peer support

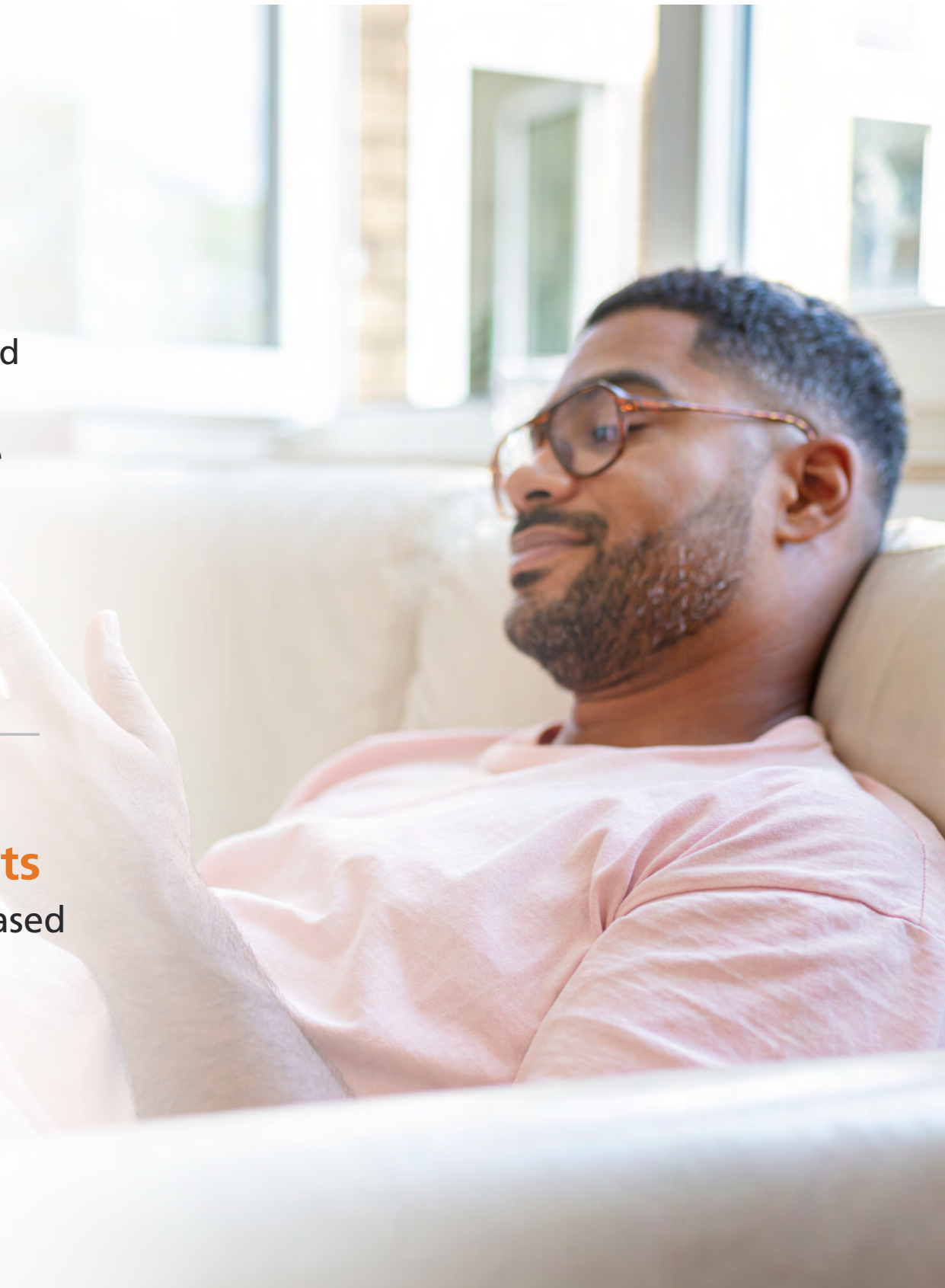


Calls and messages to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's hotline

**grew 338% in March 2020** from a month earlier.<sup>1</sup>



**13% of adults** reported new or increased **substance use** during the pandemic.<sup>2</sup>



Overcoming substance use during a pandemic



Member journey

# Peter's story

Overcoming substance use during a pandemic

*"During the isolation, I began struggling with alcohol again."*

**COVID-19 impact**

Previously struggled with substance use and quarantine triggered use

**Background**

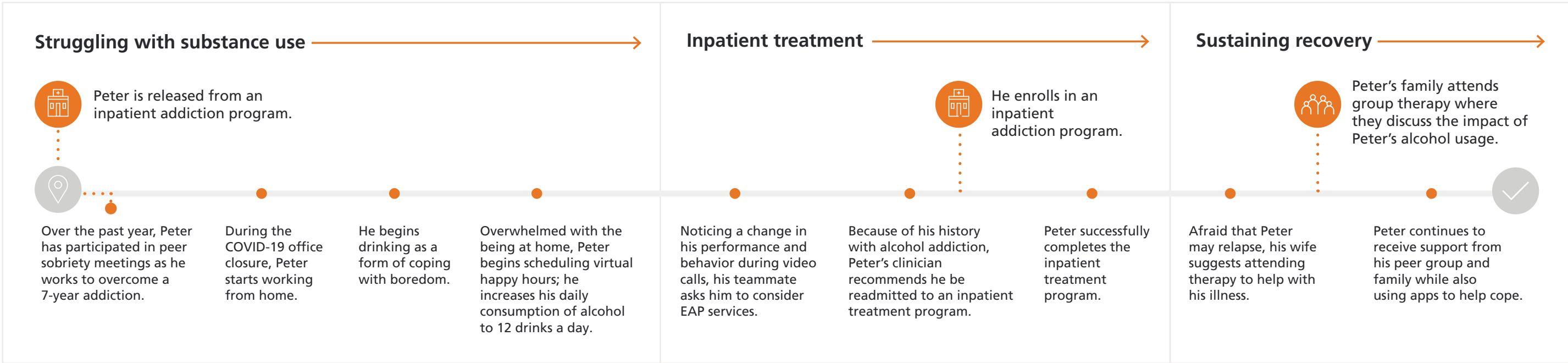
- Has struggled with alcohol addiction for over 7 years
- Highly functional with addiction
- Embarrassed by stigma of addiction
- Previously admitted to residential addiction program

**Occupation**

Project Manager

**Core needs**

- Substance use support
- Support for anxiety



Fictitious individuals used for illustrative purposes.

# Secondary stress of frontline workers

Frontline workers have faced immense pressure, heightened stress and new risks throughout the pandemic.

Frontline worker needs:

- Overcoming stigma of mental health needs
- Managing burnout
- Proactive support
- Help understanding secondary post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)



**25–40%**  
of first responders  
and health care workers  
will experience PTSD as a  
result of COVID-19.<sup>3</sup>



Secondary stress of frontline workers

Member journey

# Maria's story

## PTSD after surviving COVID-19



*"I almost died. I don't feel like I should be here."*

**COVID-19 impact**

Stress of being a first responder

**Background**

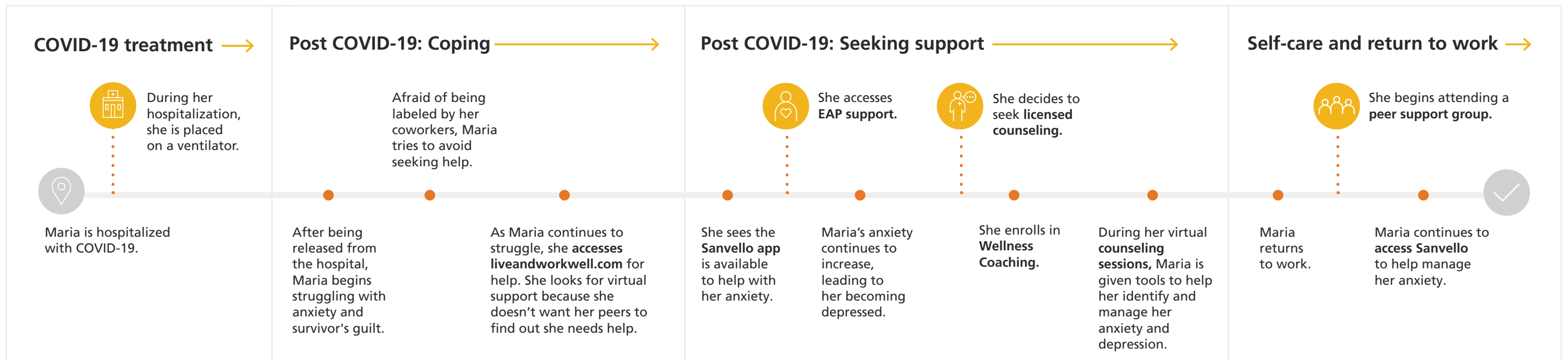
- Support frontline response to COVID-19 in a metropolitan area
- Stressed due to the demands of the job and inadequate rest
- Tested positive for COVID-19 and was hospitalized

**Occupation**

Registered nurse

**Core needs**

- Help with PTSD and stress management
- Support for mental health after hospitalization
- Coping with secondary traumatic stress resulting from exposure to another



Fictitious individuals used for illustrative purposes.

# Addressing family mental health

With disruptions to schools and businesses across America, families have had to adjust to new routines.

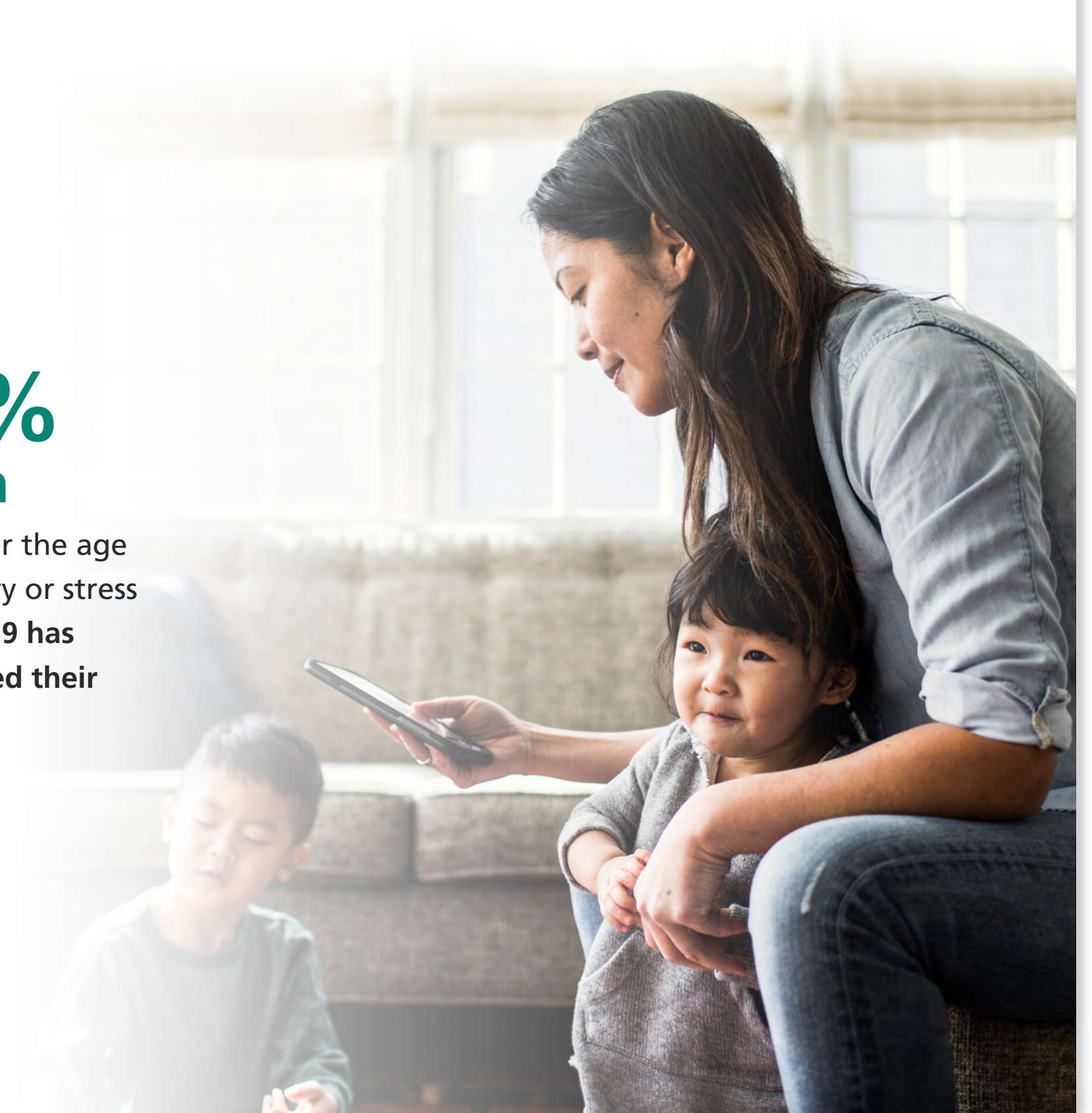
Core family needs:

- Support with parental stress
- Guidance on mental health for kids and teens
- Financial strain on household
- Anxiety of keeping multiple family members safe and healthy



Nearly **50%**  
**of women**

with children under the age of 18 say that worry or stress related to **COVID-19** has **negatively impacted their mental health.**<sup>4</sup>





Member journey

# Jamie's story

## Handling family and financial stress

*"I am struggling to handle all of the uncertainty."*

**COVID-19 impact**  
Financial strain and access to safe childcare

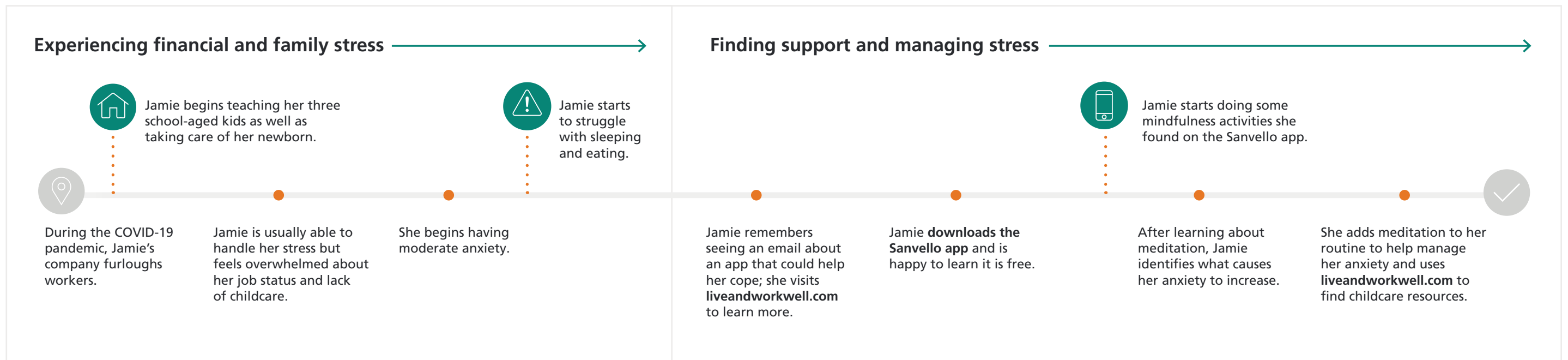
**Background**

- Was furloughed
- Manages a 6-person household (2 children with severe conditions)

**Occupation**  
Hospitality

**Core needs**

- Help dealing with stress caused by financial strain
- Support for managing depression
- Awareness of mental health resources



Fictitious individuals used for illustrative purposes.



## For more information on how Optum can help support employee mental health needs,

contact your Optum representative or visit [optum.com/behavioralhealth](https://optum.com/behavioralhealth).

### Sources

1. ABC. [Calls to US helpline jump 891%, as White House is warned of mental health crisis](#). April 7, 2020. Accessed April 29, 2021.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, June 24–30, 2020](#). August 14, 2020. Accessed April 29, 2021.
3. NBC New York. [Mount Sinai takes on mental health impact of COVID-19 crisis among health workers](#). April 30, 2020. Accessed April 29, 2021.
4. Kaiser Family Foundation. [The implications of COVID-19 for mental health and substance use](#). February 10, 2021. Accessed April 29, 2021.



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