interest disseminated a call for community caregivers with basic technological familiarity. The caregiver mentor-student partnerships were founded and maintained, with additional benefits stemming from a shared pandemic experience.

GENERATION TO GENERATION PROJECT: PAIRING STUDENTS WITH OLDER ADULT MENTORS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
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To meet the needs of older adults isolated in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we began pairing Human Services and Gerontology students with community dwelling adults 55 years of age and older, recruited through senior centers and other organizations serving older adults. Students paired with isolated older adults were tasked with building supportive relationships, assuring that basic needs were being met and that all available community resources were in place, and then documenting their mentor’s life stories with an emphasis on the resilience, strength and wisdom of their older adult mentors (to focus and build on their strengths, the older adults we engage with are referred to as our “mentors”). Oral histories and supporting artifacts are archived in the university’s library permanent repository. The oral histories portray unique perspectives into life, strength, and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine. The older adult mentors participating in the Generation to Generation project reported feeling strengthened and connected through their participation in the Generation to Generation project. To determine if social Isolation and loneliness can be ameliorated through participation in the Generation to Generation oral history project, researchers utilized the UCLA Loneliness Scale in pre- and post-participation interviews; findings will be shared.

HIGH DEATH ANXIETY AND AMBIGUOUS LOSS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM TEACHING THROUGH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
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For gerontological educators, topics such as mortality, loss, and end-of-life issues often emerge or are central in their courses. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has raised our awareness of loss and death on a global scale and teaching during the pandemic has raised questions about how educators, communities, or systems of higher education can support students’ learning while simultaneously experiencing losses during intense times of uncertainty. In this mixed-method study of 246 students enrolled in undergraduate thanatology courses, we explored their levels of death anxiety and their experiences with pandemic-related losses. We found that students’ death anxiety increased significantly during the pandemic, in comparison to the years prior (p < .001). We also conducted a content analysis in a subset of students’ written narratives (n = 44) regarding their pandemic experiences. We identified three themes. Participants desired: (a) more flexibility from instructors, no questions asked; (b) more compassion and understanding; and (c) specific, targeted support resources. The voices of students were filtered through the authors’ interpretation as educators to provide several teaching recommendations that support student learning during challenging times. The recommendations align with a trauma-informed approach, given the high rates of death anxiety and ambiguous loss among students, and have immediate implications for educators teaching during the pandemic, and for years to come. Finally, we also advocate for more university and community-based thanatology, and gerontology education offerings in general, to help normalize conversations about death, loss, and bereavement.

INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION AS INTERVENTION: SOCIAL ISOLATION IN OLDER ADULTS DURING COVID-19
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Social isolation and loneliness are prevalent and impactful in the lives of older adult across care settings, and the emergence of a deadly global pandemic requiring social distancing and quarantining exacerbated these experiences significantly in 2020. A semester-long communication-focused clinical project was developed and piloted for sophomore bachelor of nursing science (BSN) students during fall 2020. Affording preclinical nursing students the opportunity to develop communication skills early in their program of study holds potential, and learning the story of older adults appears to be mutually beneficial; older adults serve as mentors and share their story, and preclinical nursing students have an opportunity to learn about their mentor’s life, challenging some prevalent stereotypes about aging. A pre-post-clinical survey of student attitudes toward older adults suggests a dramatic positive shift in perspective, and unsolicited, anecdotal comments in student reflections support this finding: “...it helped me feel much more open to working with older adults in the future”; “This conversation taught me that my assumptions about the older generation are not always correct”. Of older adult participants, 96% reported the experience enriched and enhanced their social connectedness, with 88% requesting to participate in the program again. Narrative comments from residents indicated that their involvement enabled them to feel engaged and purposeful: “I was a mentor”; “Conversations were so alive. Connections with curious young people fill my heart and soul.” Intergenerational sharing of life stories has the potential for both healing and growth and may provide an antidote to ageism.

SOCIAL RETRIBUTION OF STUDENTS OF MASTER IN GERONTOLOGY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: ENHANCING COMPETENCIES
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