



# The Emotional Impact of the Pandemic & Navigating the New Normal

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# The Ongoing Impact

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- Physical health
- Finances
- Lifestyles at home
- Relationships
- The way we work
- How we communicate with one another
- Changes in interactions with each other (social distancing & masks)
- Mental and emotional wellbeing

# The Early Stage

Fear - an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat.



# The Digital Age

- Discovered new modes of communicating.
- Adjustment to new ways of working.
- Increase in digital presence. Raising questions of work allocation, collaboration, motivation, and aspects of work overload and presenteeism.
- Workplace monitoring and technostress.



# The Emotional Impact of the Pandemic

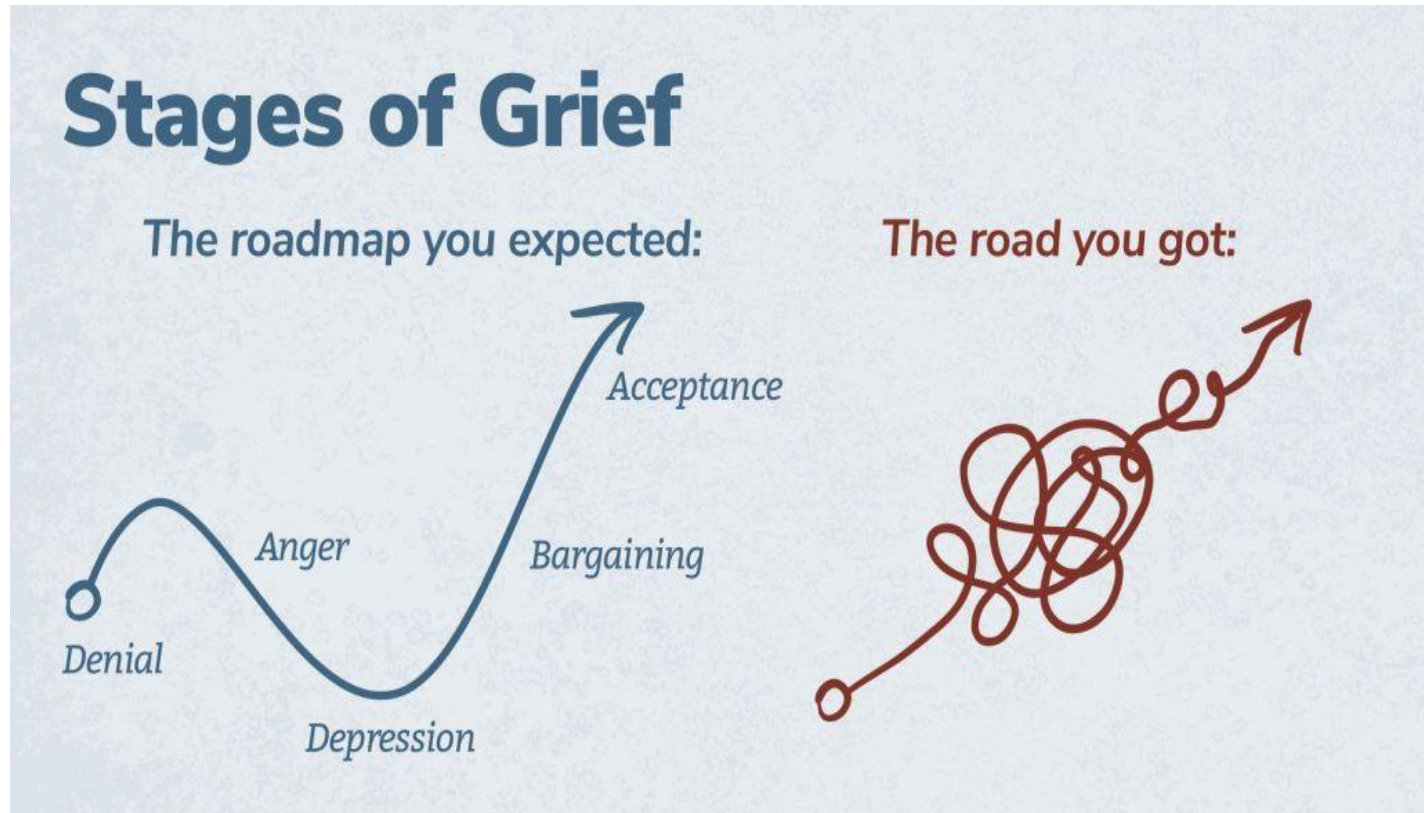
- **Fear**
  - Fear of uncertainty / Fear of safety.
  - Anxiety / PTSD.
- **Frustration**
  - Locus of control.
  - Work/life balance.
  - Mandates / decreased trust.
- **Depression**
  - Sadness from isolation.
  - Decreased connection.
- **Stress**
  - Burnout - High Stress over a period of time.
  - Compassion fatigue - Feeling depleted, no more to give.
  - Frequent changes / transitions in life.
- **Grief**
  - Grief of people.
  - Grief of old normal – The grief that's not talked about.



# Stages of Grief

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

- Grief is not linear.
- We grow around our grief.

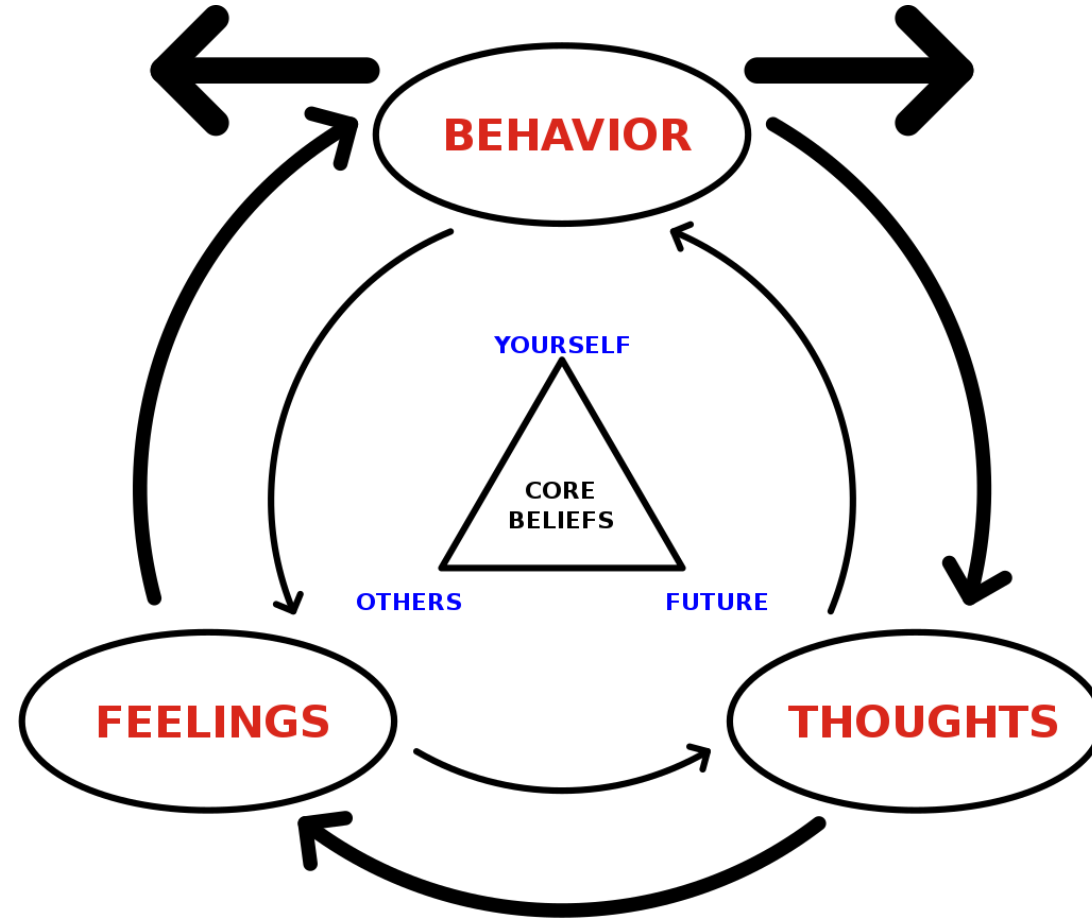


# Emotions

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- What are emotions and why do we have them?
  - Physiological feelings
  - Nonverbal reactions
  - Cognitive interpretations
  - Verbal expressions
- Emotions gives a meaning to our human experience.
- Emotions are temporary.
- Emotions vs. feelings.
- Our minds play an important role in determining how we feel.

# The thought, feeling, behavior connection





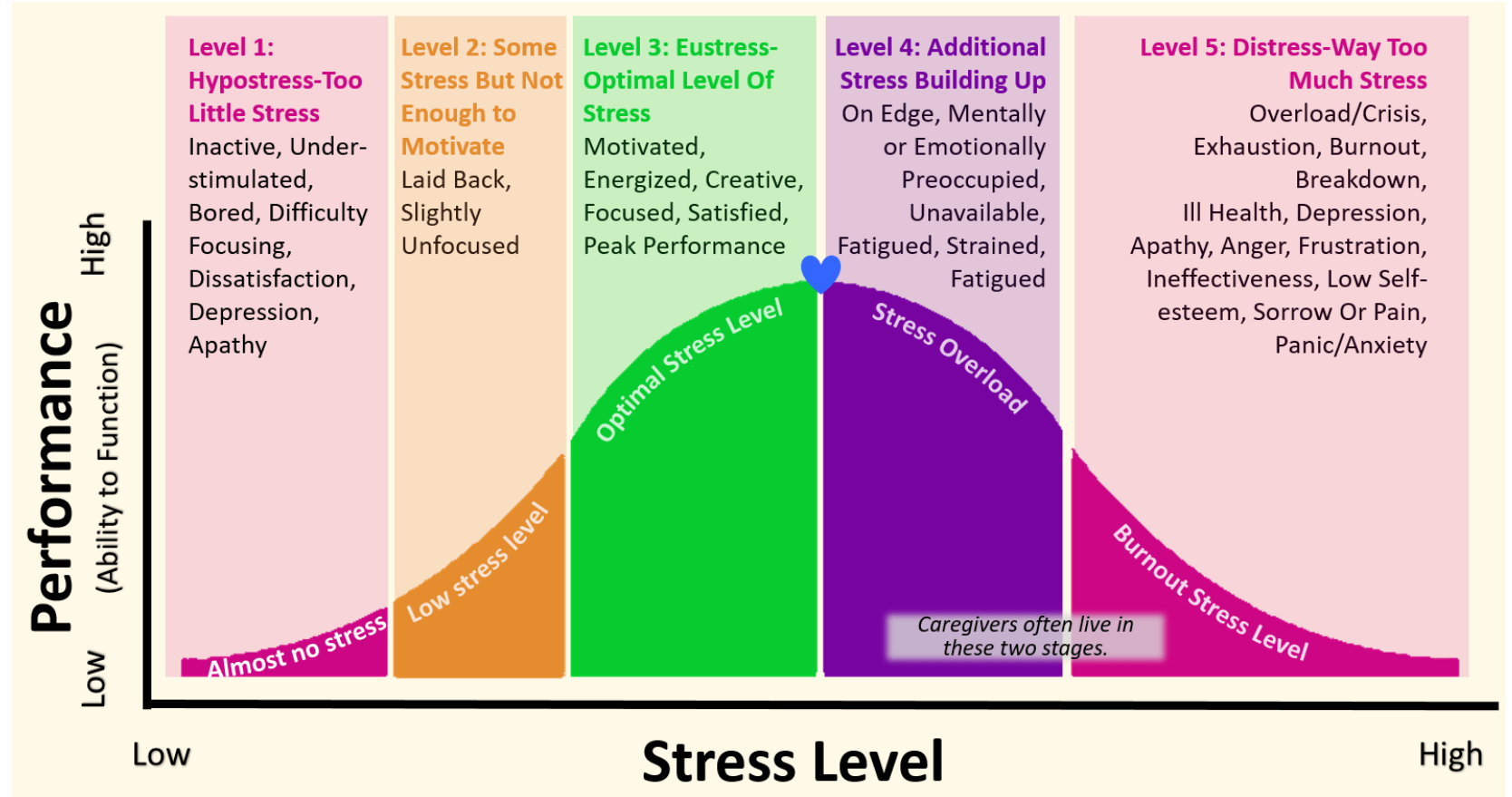
# Key Findings – The Positive

- More together than divided?
  - More aware of our shared humanity and of the living conditions of others.
  - Many worry about their societies becoming more divided in the future.
  - Many feel that COVID-19 has changed us into more caring societies.
  - Many feel that people's concern for one another has improved.
- People have hopes for profound change.
  - The changes to our lives since the onset of the pandemic have re-connected people with nature, and re-awakened people to the way human activity affects the environment.
- Shifting to a future focused talking points
  - Highlights in the strengths and challenges of healthcare systems.
  - People aspire to have their country be safer, fairer and more environmentally-friendly.
  - Most people see the need for international cooperation to solve this and future crises.

# Compounding Impact

- Compounding impact of stress and uncertainty.
  - Changes in our biology and our future responses to stress triggers – Higher resiliency for some, hairpin triggers for others.
- Increased need to build and maintain more self-awareness vs the previous role of autopilot.
- A shift in priorities that is changing the landscape of professional and personal life.

# Impact of Stress



# Warning Signs

## Physical



- Tired/ lethargic most of the time
- Frequent headaches, muscle pain, stomach pain.
- Lower immunity, frequent illness.
- Changes in appetite, overeating and undereating.
- Changes in sleep habits.
- Physical tension in shoulders, back or neck.
- Withdrawn/ Isolated.

## Emotional



- Self doubt, sense of failure.
- Loss of motivation and interest in activities.
- Detachment, feeling alone in the world.
- Feeling helpless, trapped or defeated.
- Decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment.
- Increased frustration and irritability.
- Not wanting to exist.

## Mental



- Increased cynical and negative outlook.
- Negative self-talk.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Perfectionist tendencies, nothing is ever good enough.
- Lack of creativity.
- The need to be in control, reluctance to delegate to others.
- Lack of trust.
- Not self/ acts out of character.

## Professional



- Wishing meetings/ appointments would get cancelled.
- Finding your work less rewarding.
- Bored, uninterested, impatient.
- Drop in performance.
- Getting irritated by certain co-workers or people.
- Lashing out, increased hostility,
- Skipping work, coming in late or leaving early.

# Negative Coping Behaviors

- Smoking
- Drinking a lot of caffeine – more than 2-3 cups
- Drinking alcohol and/or using drugs
- Overuse of over-the-counter medications
- Overeating/undereating
- Overspending / underspending
- Watching too much TV / playing videogames
- Anger outbursts
- Withdrawal / isolation
- Denial of stress symptoms
- Engaging in self-destructive relationships
- Procrastination or overworking

# The New Normal

- A new state of stability in times of uncertainty.
- An active process of change including trial and error and testing new boundaries.
  - Disruption in routines.
  - Change is uncomfortable and is leaving many people disoriented and feeling insecure.
- Reassessing priorities and the cost/benefit consideration for decisions.
  - Decisions as simple as going shopping, visiting family, and seeing a health care provider have all come with a cost/benefit trade off we rarely considered in the past.



# Stages of Change



## **PRECONTEMPLATION**

Build awareness for my need to change

## **CONTEMPLATION**

Increase my pros for change  
and decrease my cons

## **PREPARATION**

Commit and plan

## **ACTION**

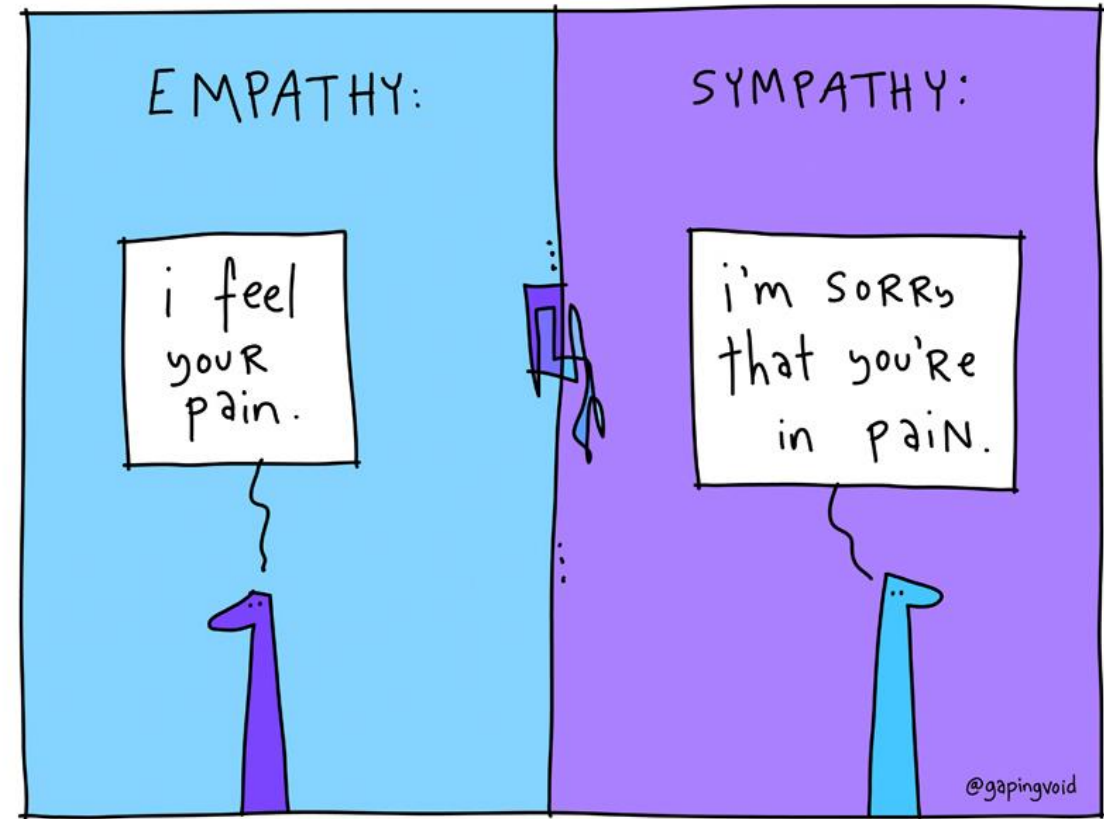
Implement and revise my plan

## **MAINTENANCE**

Integrate change into my lifestyle

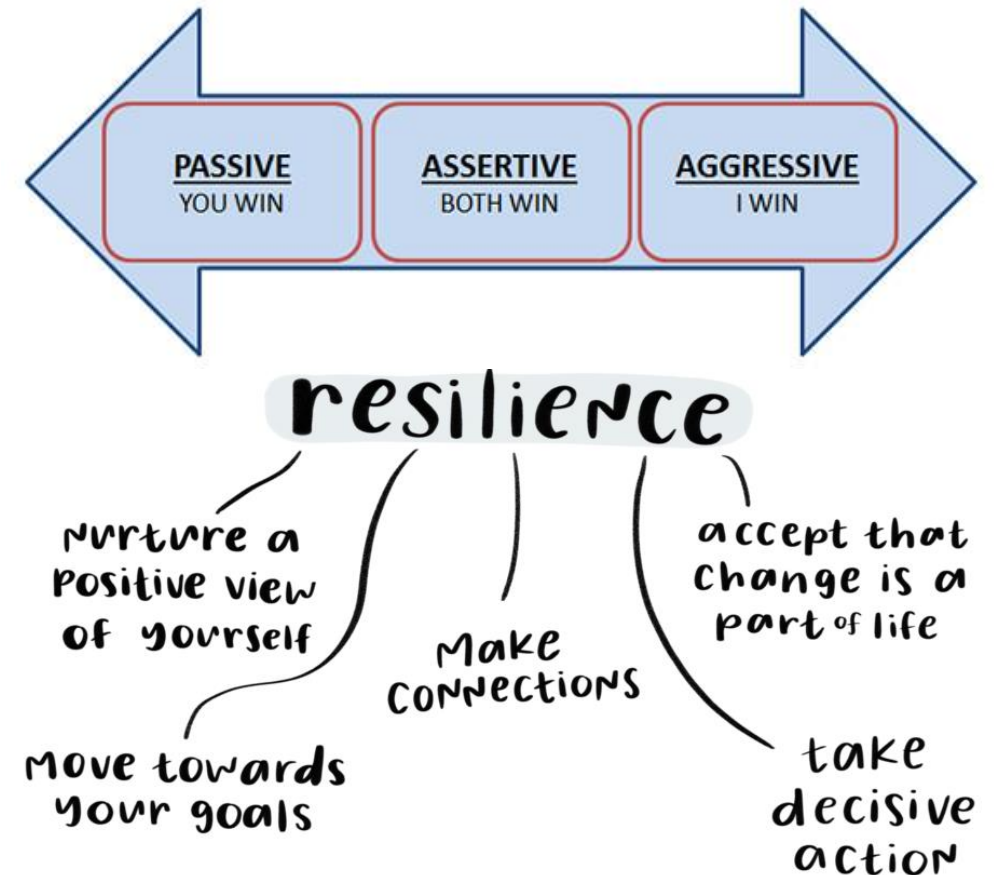
# Empathy

- Positive influence in helping others
  - Compassion Satisfaction – the "feel good" response you get from being present and helpful to others.
- Empathy vs. sympathy.
- How to show empathy?
  - Really work to consider someone else's perspective without judgement.



# Navigating the New Normal

- Communication / assertiveness
- Positive thinking
- Emotional Intelligence
- Focus on what is in your control
- Gratitude
- Mindfulness
- Resilience
- Self-care
- Seek professional help/ EAP



# Self-care

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- Improves sense of balance.
- Prevents overload and burn out.
- Reduces the negative effects of stress.
- Refocus on presenting problems to address them more effectively.
- Selfcare is not the same for everyone.

# Finding your New Balance

- Not just massages and bubble bathes...
- Multi system and proactive



<https://olgaphoenix.com/self-care-wheel/>

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# Conclusion

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- When we take care of ourselves, we set an example for those around us to do the same.
- Small changes can make a big difference.
  - It's an imperfect process that is evolving. Patience and perseverance are important.
- Connecting with others makes those efforts more successful.



# Contact Information



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**Thank you!**

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# Contact Your Benefit Experts



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