The Emotional Impact of the Pandemic & Navigating the New Normal

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The Ongoing Impact

- 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

- 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 an 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.

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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

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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

• 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

• 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!
Contact Your Benefit Experts

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