

Coping through the COVID-19 pandemic

Today you may be feeling tired, exhausted, perhaps experiencing difficulty concentrating. You may fear you are losing the normal functioning of your body and mind. Well, you are not alone, and you are not in danger of losing all of your abilities. You will survive and perhaps be changed in unimaginable ways.

I would like to try and shed some hope, and perhaps emotional support as we collectively navigate this current reality.

During this time of increased anxiety and fear, our brain is under traumatic stress... we feel threatened. The amygdala, the centre of fear in our brain, senses a threat. It kicks into action directing our body's response to a perceived threat. Our heart rate increases, our breathing accelerates in preparation for our body to fight or run. The Fight/Flight response is activated. This response is a great temporary protection, however with a prolonged on-going perceived threat, our brain has difficulty returning to a calm state.

This is essentially what we are experiencing every day, and our body becomes exhausted as it is constantly in this fight/flight mode.

During this time, we grieve many losses, the sudden collective loss of "normal", as physical distancing becomes the unwelcome reality.

Without the ability to know the outcome of this pandemic, compounded by constant media updates, there is a sense of hopelessness. Hope may come in the form of a vaccine, hopefully providing comfort and relief.

All of this takes a physical and emotional toll. Even though we are resting, even sleeping more - we are tired, we are frustrated, nervous, and exhausted. When we are just trying to survive, patience, critical and abstract thinking, concentration, all become impossible.

Just know, "We are all in this together!"

We search for moments of joy, the plump robin fighting for the worm, a blossom peeking through the soil, children's laughter kicking a ball down the empty street. Moments of profound joy!

We don't function optimally. Our expectations must be lowered. Survival comes in self-compassion, self-care - just walk, breath, sing, write, pray, play...

When we are living day to day in a chronic state of stress, strength comes in the form of Grace. Avoid the 'guilt couch'! As you navigate this uncharted landscape embrace grace, embrace the change.

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