

COVID-19: Healing after Trauma

What is TRAUMA?

- Trauma is an emotional response to **ANYTHING** that exceeds our nervous system's ability to cope

Trauma has BOTH emotional & physical effects.

- There is a mind/body connection related to the effects and symptoms of trauma
- The frontal lobe of the brain is essentially “knocked offline” and flooded with stress hormones
- These stress hormones create a state of fight/flight/freeze that our brain and body reacts to in an effort to keep us safe when we perceive that we are in some sort of danger

Mind/body connection creates the link for emotional & physical reactions.

- Anxiety
- Poor Sleep
- Lack of concentration
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue & exhaustion
- Headaches, nausea, upset stomach

The Pre-Conditions of TRAUMA:

- There are 6 PRE-CONDITIONS that lead to our brains & bodies believing that we are in danger; this creates the trauma response (stress hormones flood the brain, fight/flight/freeze, anxiety & overwhelm are ignited.)

1. Lack of Predictability.

- Leads to anxiety
- Disrupts our ability to make good decisions
- Routines are thrown out the window or thrown for a loop

The remedy for a lack of predictability:

- Create a schedule for yourself that you can stick to
- Control what you CAN
- Make a new routine to create some predictability for you & your family
- Keep using or begin to use a calendar

2. Immobility

- Staying home more
- working from home or not working at all
- kids not going to school/camps/friend's houses
- On-line shopping
- Missing social events & special occasions

The remedy for immobility:

- Move your body!
- Walk, walk, walk!
- Dance
- Yoga
- Fresh air – even just 10 minutes helps

3. Loss of connection:

- We are social human beings and NEED connection with other human beings: especially those that we love and enjoy as part of our lives
- We need and crave physical touch and human to human contact
- Seeing masked faces, not seeing smiles & not shaking hands or hugging people is a loss that we have been grieving for nearly 18-months

Remedy for loss of connection:

- Find new ways to connect: FaceTime, Zoom, Microsoft Meetings
- Virtual games with friends & family members
- Virtual happy hours
- Virtual family dinners
- *put these new plans on your calendar & make them a part of your new schedule *

4. Loss of sense of time & sequence:

- What day is it anyway?!
- Feeling a lot like the movie Groundhog Day!
- The days all seem to run together without anything to differentiate one from another.

Remedy for the loss of sense of time and sequence:

- Mindfulness practices
- Simple breathing and grounding exercises
- Being fully present in any moment
- Stop multi-tasking
- Connect with nature

5. Loss of Safety:

- Living in and through a health crisis/global pandemic
- The possibility of severe illness or death for ourselves and/or our friends & loved ones
- Mixed messages from all directions (the media, politicians, medical communities, friends, family, co-workers)
- Unknown long-term effects of both the virus and the vaccines

Remedy for the loss of safety:

- Activities that bring comfort: listening to music, art, writing, baking, prayer, meditation, yoga
- Wearing soft & comfortable clothing
- Self-soothing: heated/weighted blankets, low lighting, aromatherapy, candles, hot shower or bubble bath
- Fresh air

6. Loss of our sense of meaning or purpose:

- Who am I when I cannot do what I usually do?
- Many of us identify very strongly with our careers or our role as caretakers of those we love.

Remedy for loss of sense of meaning or purpose:

- Connect – with other human beings – virtually, over the phone, write letters, journal.
- Love – give and receive love – get creative!
- Serve – find new ways to honor your gifts and purpose. Serve others to help your community and yourself HEAL.

Healthy perspectives on emotion:

- Emotions are neither good or bad, right or wrong.
- Feelings just ARE. They exist.
- There's a difference between having an emotion and acting on the emotion.
- Emotions don't last forever. Emotions are always in flux.
- Emotions are not facts.
- Be willing to acknowledge, name and accept your emotions.

Helpful coping statements:

- This feeling is uncomfortable but normal.
- I don't need to focus on this feeling or try to figure it out or change it.
- I can choose to distract myself.
- This feeling is not the boss. I am in control.
- This feeling is a helpful reminder to slow down & breathe.
- I allow this feeling to be here and I know that it will soon pass.

Are you taking care of YOURSELF?

- Are you eating 3 healthy meals a day and staying hydrated?
- Do you do something to relax for 10-minutes at least 3 times a day?
- Are you keeping your mind stimulated?
- Do you exercise at least 3 days a week?
- Are you keeping your obligations and appointments?
- Do you sleep at least 6-8 hours each night?
- Are you kind to yourself?