



Re-opening: What can we expect and how do we respond from a mental health perspective?

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Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on our wellbeing

- Losses connected to basic survival (e.g. access to food, job losses, homelessness)
- Increased social inequities
- Uncertainty
- Unique losses at different life stages (youth, adult, senior, etc.)
- Loss of loved ones, bedside and grieving processes changed
- Collective grief, not necessarily connected to loss of life
- Losses of go-to coping strategies and activities for enjoyment
- Loss of human connection and increased loneliness
- Day-to-day activities became more complicated
- Decision/Moral fatigue
- Exhaustion (juggling work with children at home, etc.)

The nervous system in overdrive

- Facing real threat continuously – brain on alert/reactive state
- More time in stress response fight, flight or freeze
- Impacts our bodies, minds, emotions, sleep schedules and relationships
- When nervous system is “revving” more it may lead to unwanted thoughts, discomfort -> the need for soothing -> increase in substance use
- Increased anxiety (anticipatory, health, general, etc.)
- Anxiety may be further heightened with services opening/return to offices, where previous “safe” environments may now feel less safe

Our sense of safety and the Window of Tolerance

(Dr. Dan Siegel)

Hyper-Arousal Fight/Flight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overwhelmed by emotion• Panic & anxiety• Racing thoughts• Anger• Feel unsafe
Window of Tolerance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to manage and thrive• Able to respond to difficulties faced (use coping strategies)
Hypo-Arousal Freeze/Shutdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shut down, withdraw and can't think• Emotionally numb• Feelings of depression and/or shame• Withdrawn

What does this mean? What might we notice in our interactions with others?

- Quick to anger and/or anger outbursts
- Irritability
- Impatience
- Immobilized and/or difficulty communicating
- Panic and anxiety
- Difficulties with focus and concentration
- Challenging/questioning
- People trying to navigate how safe they are/feel

How can we respond?

Supporting others/de-escalating:

- Remain calm and use active listening
- Use open-ended questions (what, where, who, how?)
- Check in with yourself and how you are reacting and what might be needed (e.g. taking a slow breath)
- Use a “soft gaze” and non-confrontational body language
- Provide reassurance
- Provide information, where needed
- Reflect how someone is feeling and show empathy (“I understand you are feeling frustrated with these processes”)
- Provide options/choices, where possible
- Use I statement and “and” versus but (“I hear your concerns and I also know we need to follow these protocols..”)
- With panic, provide people a space to speak away from others, if needed and if safe to do so

How we can respond

The 'ABC Formula' and Limit Setting (Canadian Training Institute, Adapted from McLeod, Wayne. Veterans Administration Hospital (Long Beach California))

- A. clearly identify the behaviour that must stop
“please lower your voice so I can hear you better”
- B. tell why the behaviour must change (“I want to be able to hear your concerns and discuss options”)
- C. give options
you must give at least three options and the last (usually a consequence) needs to be one the staff are able to enforce

****Be mindful of your own safety and when help is required****

How can we respond?

Supporting ourselves:

- Check in with how you are doing (emotionally, physically, etc.)
- Self-care basics (exercise, sleep and healthy eating)
- Deep breathing and relaxation exercises to regulate our nervous system
- Take breaks and get outside
- Mindfulness exercises
- Grounding
- Positive self-talk (“I’m safe”, “everyone is doing their best at the moment in the current circumstances”)
- Share your feelings
- Smile and laugh whenever you can

The importance of pacing and fostering resilience

- People may feel they have less resources (resilience in the tank) to cope with transitions/change
- Research shows that five factors promote resiliency at both the individual and organizational level. These are:
 - Purpose
 - Flexibility
 - Adaptability
 - Connection to others
 - Wellness
 - Hope
- Will take time to “re-train” ourselves to feel a new sense of safety
- Our brains are taking in new facts, and may still respond with vigilance
- **Make mental health a priority – We need to talk about it!**

Dealing with loss: The cycle of transition (William Bridges)

from: Returning to the workplace-Resiliency Toolkit for Employees- fseap)

Stage:	Experiences:	Tips:
Ending, Losing and Letting Go Disengaging from the old.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shock, numbness, denial, loss, grief, anger, unease, resistance, blaming, complaining, doubt, and stress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take time and space to come to terms with the change. Identify what you are losing what will help you adjust: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is over? What is being left behind? What will you keep and carry forward?
The Neutral Zone Accepting the old is gone, but not fully adjusted to the "new".	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indecision, anxiety, uncertainty, fear, confusion, and a sense of chaos. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep focused on short-term objectives and goals. Stay connected with the bigger picture.
New Beginnings Beginning to fully understand and connect to the new.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy, creativeness, renewed purpose and direction, increased growth and cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on new understandings, values and attitudes. Review strengths/skills gained through the transition and how to build on these. New understanding of your sense of purpose.

The benefits of compassion

- Compassion towards self and others reduces stress hormones and can help manage expectations we have of ourselves and others
- Compassion involves silencing the inner critic and amplifying the inner ally!
- Compassionate statements might include:
 - “I am doing the best I can under the circumstances” I, like so many, have faced difficult challenges over this pandemic”
 - “I can learn from the decisions I make and makes changes, where needed, moving forward”
 - “They are trying to find a solution as best as they can, but things aren’t necessarily running the same as they used to in our current climate”

Resources

- Family Services Durham 905 666-6240 or 1 866 840-6697
- Durham Mental Health Services (dmhs.ca) provides 24/7 support to those 16+ experiencing crisis (905-666-0483 or 1-800-742-1890)
- Canada Suicide Prevention Service offers 24/7 crisis support (1-833-456-4566 (24/7))
- [MindBeacon](http://info.mindbeacon.com) (info.mindbeacon.com) and [AbilitiCBT](http://Ontario.abiliticbt.com) (Ontario.abiliticbt.com) provide free internet-based CBT for anxiety and depression
- Wellnesstogether.ca (mental health and substance use support) provides immediate text support, self-assessment, self-guided courses, apps, and counselling by text or phone
- [BounceBack](http://bouncebackontario.ca) (bouncebackontario.ca) is a free phone-based program to address stress, anxiety, and depression
- ConnexOntario provides help finding mental health and addiction support (1-866-531-2600)

Resources

- Youth Crisis Services offers immediate support to children/youth and their caregivers (905-666-0483 or 1-800-742-1890).
- Good2Talk.ca provides 24/7 telephone support for post-secondary students (1-866-925-5454).
- Kids Help Phone: Children and youth can seek 24/7 support from the kidshelpline.ca or by calling (1-800-668-6868).
- Durham Counselling Walk-in Clinic provides same-day counselling(Wednesdays) to children age 3+ and their families (289-509-0603 ext. 3203)
- Camh.ca (mental health and the COVID-19 pandemic- resources and Apps available)
- Anxietycanada.ca (anxiety resources for children, youth and adults)/Mindshift App
- The Working Mind COVID-19 Self-care & Resilience Guide | The Working Mind (theworkingmind.ca)



Questions?



Thank you!

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