



COVID-FATIGUE: Tired of being cooped up, careful, uncertain and scared

Steven N. Scoggin M.Div., Psy.D, LCMHC
Associate Vice-President of Behavioral Health
Interim Chair, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine
sscoggin@wakehealth.edu 336-716-7578

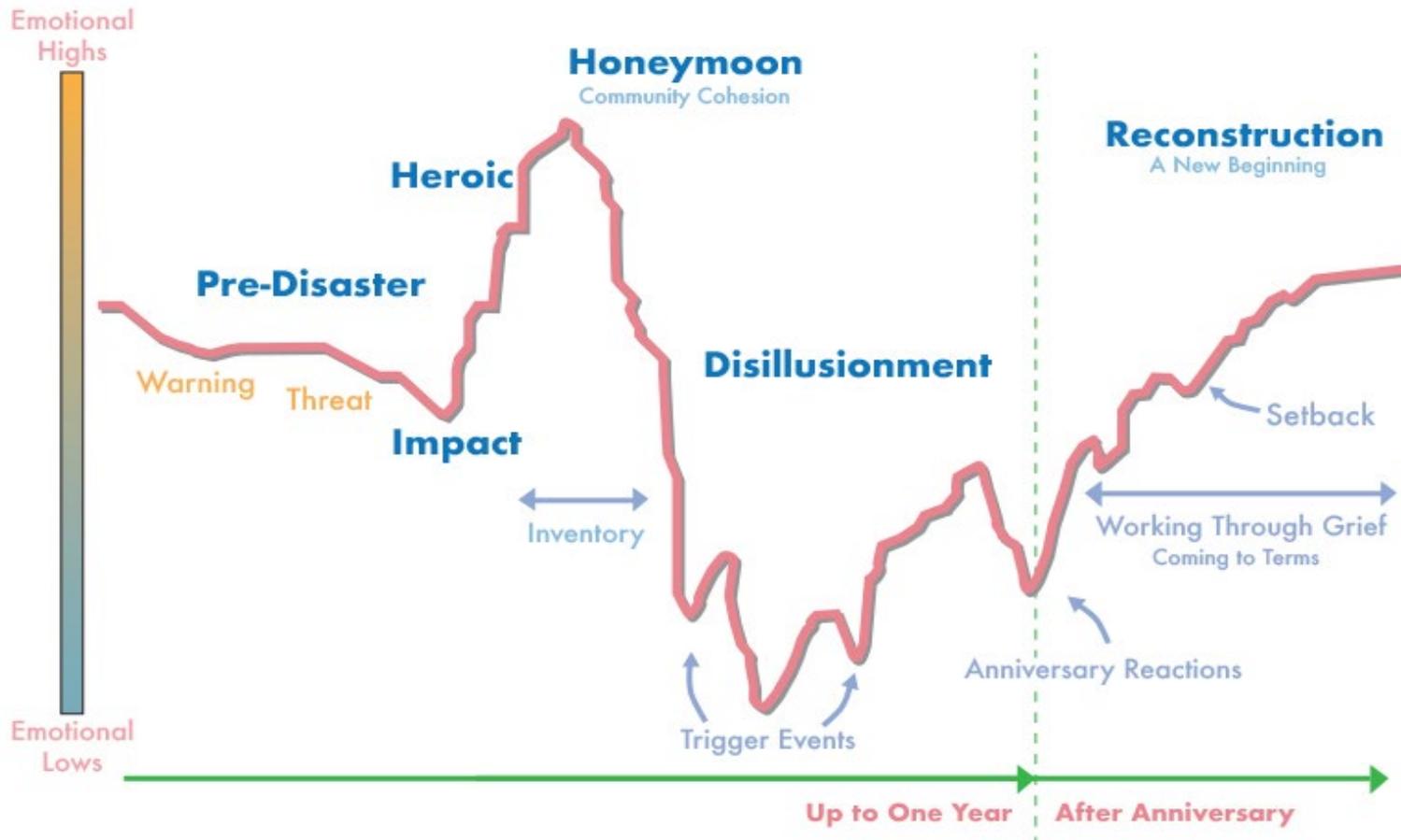


APA's recent Stress in America 2020 survey:

Significant sources of stress for most Americans:

- Future of our nation (83%)
- COVID-19 Pandemic (78%)
- Violence towards minorities (71%)
- For parents, impact of COVID-19 on children's social development (71%)
- Government response to the COVID-19 pandemic (66%)
- Racial discrimination (55%)
- For parents, impact of COVID-19 on children's behavior (55%)

<https://www.apa.org/news/press/release/stress/2020/stress-in-America-covid-june.pdf>



At the end of May, 2020 the US Census Bureau reported a third of Americans are showing signs of clinical anxiety or depression.

10 Eye-Opening Statistics On the Mental Health Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic

1. The economy is now a significant source of stress for 70% of Americans.
2. The government's response to the crisis is causing stress to 67% of Americans.
3. More than 1/3 of Americans have displayed clinical signs of anxiety, depression, or both since the coronavirus pandemic began.
4. Only 50% of employees are comfortable discussing mental health issues.
5. Nearly one-in-five American say they have had a physical reaction when thinking about the outbreak.
6. In a March Pew survey, 18% said they had experienced nervousness or anxiety most or all of the time during the past week.
7. Text messages to a federal disaster distress hotline increased more than 1000% last month.
8. Mental health is poorest among those unemployed for six months or more (Gallup)
9. The longer-term psychological consequences of collective trauma can last a decade or more.
10. Pandemic stress is significantly higher in your people.

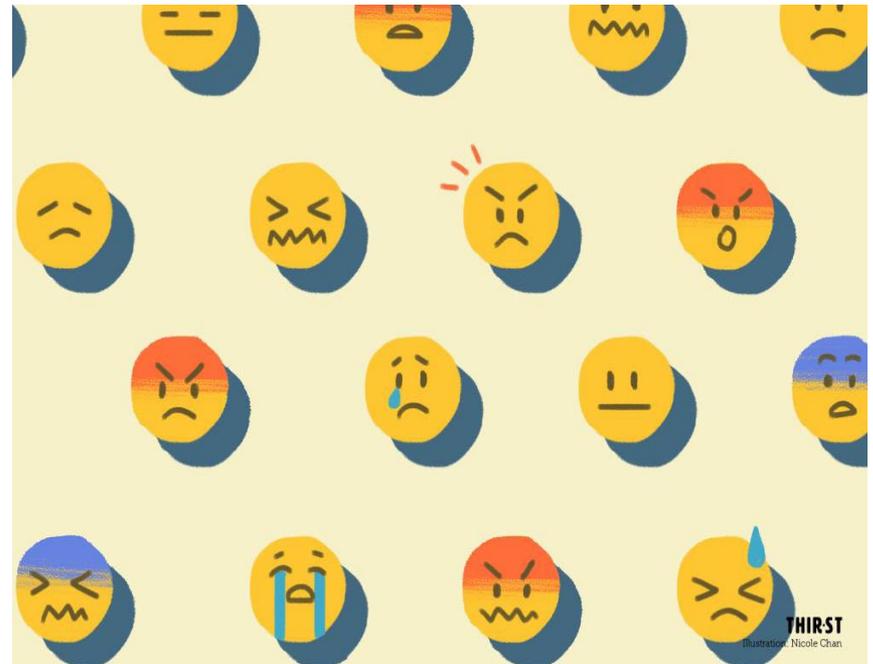
Naz Beheshti, Forbes Women, May 2020

Normal emotional responses to COVID-19

- Uncertainty, overwhelm, anxiety, panic
- Isolation, sense of loss (family, friends, colleagues, support systems)
- Difficulty focusing
- Fatigue/exhaustion
 - Including “decision fatigue”
- Sense of pressure (need to work longer/harder)
- Heightened potential conflict and stress

Common Emotional Reactions to adverse/highly stressful events

- Sadness
- Frustration
- Embarrassment
- Doubt
- Anger
- Isolation
- Concerns about being incompetent
- Anxiety
- Distress
- Fear
- Shame
- Guilt
- Horror



Common Responses to Stress

- **Physical reactions:** rapid heart rate, muscle tension, headaches, GI distress, nausea, insomnia, fatigue, changes in appetite
- **Emotional reactions:** fear, anxiety, anger, irritability, reactivity, argumentativeness, hopelessness, depression, numbness, detachment, despair, lack of emotional balance
- **Cognitive reactions:** difficulty with problem solving or decision making, imagining worst-case scenarios, flashbacks/nightmares
- **Behavioral reactions:** hostility, blaming, unnecessary risk-taking, reduced ability to cooperate, conflicts with peers or family, withdrawal



Some of the feelings we are hearing many of you are experiencing at this time include:

- **Misplaced anger:** Getting irritated or angrier than normal at people and things that would not normally make you upset. This may be driven by underlying thoughts like, “I can’t stand this!” and “When will this end!” as well as grief over the things that we are missing in this time.
- **Difficulty focusing:** As your brain tries to make sense of this transition, integrate all the information, and continue to move forward on a daily basis with the tasks at hand, you may find it more challenging to stay focused.
- **Worry thoughts:** “What will happen next?” “What should I do to prepare?” “How can I stay sane right now?”
- **Antsy-ness:** You maybe be noticing a sense of urgency in your body and mind to DO SOMETHING! You may have even taken action on those urges!
- **Lethargy:** A lack of energy to do much. This may be related to grief as well as the energy it takes to change and integrate new information. This needs to be honored. (Note: If you have a history of depression, you may need to be more careful about balancing rest and action. Depression calls us to “curl up in bed.”)

Paige Bentley, Ph.D., LCMHCS, BCC

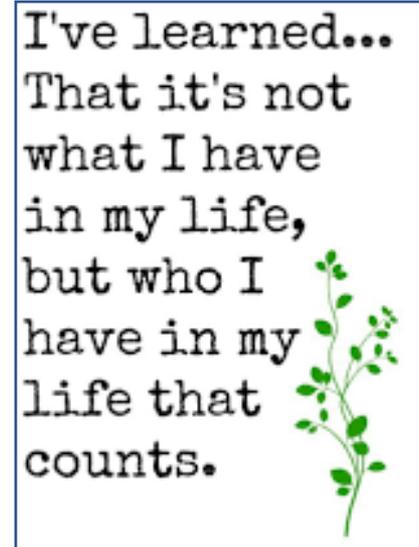
Strategies to manage Stress and Maintain Well-Being (Physical Self-Care)

- **Maintain good health habits.** As stress increases, our health habits may get less attention!
 - Eat nutritious foods
 - Limit alcohol use
 - Allow yourself to get enough sleep.
- **Keep Moving.** Exercise is a great way to handle stress and help you sleep well.
 - Add nature when possible!
- **Pace Yourself.**
 - Healthcare is a marathon.
 - We can't care for our patients, families, or communities when we are running on empty.



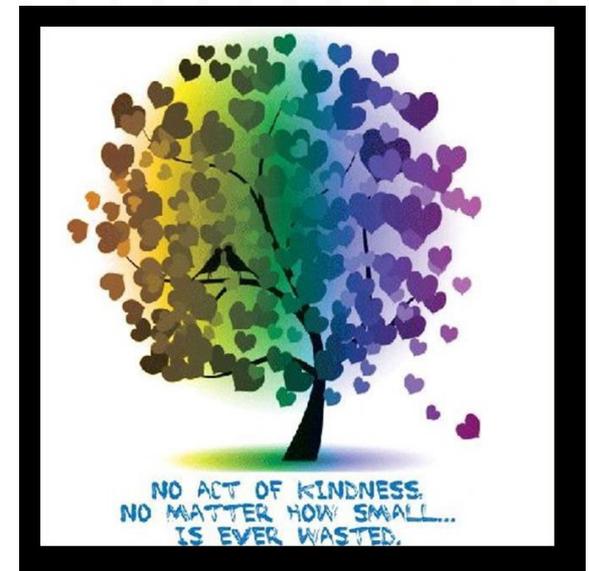
Strategies to manage Stress and Maintain Well-Being (Interpersonal Self-Care)

- **Stay Connected**
 - Reach out to family, friends, members of faith communities for social contact.
Meaningful connections and emotional support are critical to our health and well-being.
 - Support one another.
- **Nurture social relationships**
 - Make time.
 - Express admiration, appreciation, and affection.
 - Respond actively to “good news” from the important people in your life. (Make a big deal!)
 - Manage (and don’t ignore) conflict.



Strategies to Manage Stress and Maintain Well-Being (Interpersonal Self-Care)

- **Show compassion for yourself and for others.**
Be kind to yourself and your colleagues.
- **Practicing Acts of Kindness**
 - Profound impact, kindness as a “superpower”
 - Seek out opportunities. They are everywhere!
 - 30-Day Kindness Challenge (Feldhahn)
 - Positivity
 - Praise
 - Kindness



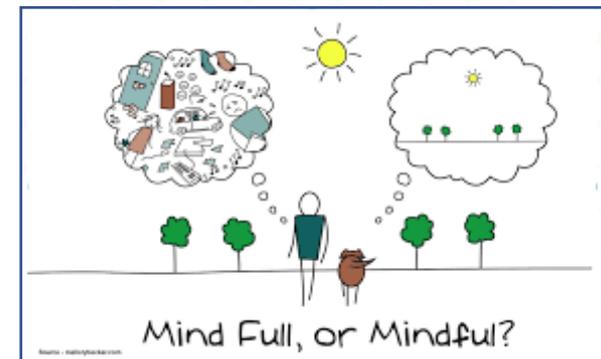
Strategies to Manage Stress and Maintain Well-Being

- **Focus on what lifts your spirits.**
Take time for the things that bring you joy.
- **Savoring Life's Joys** (Lyubomirsky, 2008)
 - Relish ordinary experiences. Pay attention!
 - Share special memories with family and friends (“replay” happy days).
 - Celebrate good news.
 - Be mindful.
 - Notice beauty.



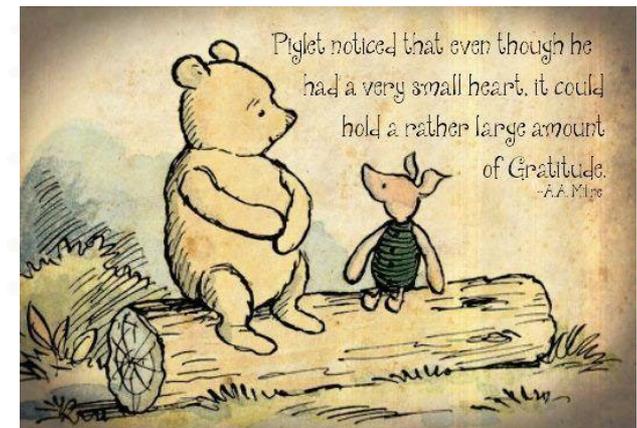
Strategies to Manage Stress and Maintain Well-Being

- **Be Present**
 - Future concerns and “what if” questions can take us out of the present moment.
 - Practice **mindfulness** (simply noticing something in the present moment – your feelings, what you see, what you hear – without judgment) to stay present, focused, and centered.
- **Check your body language before speaking with a patient (or almost anyone!)**
 - Check yourself before an interaction – take a deep breath, make sure you’re speaking at a reasonable pace, assume a confident and comforting position with your body language.



Strategies to Manage Stress and Maintain Well-Being

- **Focus on gratitude and appreciation.** A grateful perspective can be a great antidote to a narrow focus on only the problem. Take time to appreciate the ways that you see people continuing to show up and pitching in however is needed.
- **Express Gratitude** (Lyubomirsky, 2008)
 - Gratitude Journal
 - Pay attention to things you may take for granted
 - Express gratitude directly to another person (call, note, face to face)



Gratitude Letter

- Write a letter of appreciation or gratitude to someone who has contributed importantly to your well-being, but whom you have never properly thanked.
 - Works best when delivered in person, but you might need to mail it and follow up with a phone call if the recipient lives far away. (Sending the letter via e-mail and obtaining the response via e-mail will not suffice here.)



What AM I to DO?

- Give yourself permission to be where you are. Were all disillusioned. It's ok not to be ok all the time. What we resist can persist. Abnormal IS the new normal !
- Being strong is overrated. Honesty with yourself is best medicine.
- Breathe... deeply...often. Good science behind this one.
- Move daily (exercise sounds like more work).
- Stay connected...safely.
- Decrease media calories or declare a fast occasionally.
- Develop a new routine as our previous ones have been disrupted. Especially important with children at home learning.
- Adopt a mindset of a running marathon and not a sprint. Your paradigms shape your behavior. Slow and steady wins the race.
- Use this extraordinary moment to do something out of the ordinary.
- Rediscover what is most important to you.

THANK YOU

Q & A