

THE SHAMES JCC HOLISTIC WELLNESS



Boosting Mental Health Resiliency in the COVID Era

by Jennifer Convissor, LCSW

Life has always been uncertain. We have never know what tomorrow will bring, but we've taken refuge in the patterns and seeming predictable nature of our days. The COVID-19 crisis, with its mandated social isolation and pervasive threat of infection, has created a kind of atomic fusion, a clash of mind-numbing monotony mixed with a steady undercurrent of existential crisis.

With the widest lens, this pandemic is a clarion call to see the deep roots of our interdependence. On a smaller scale, it shines a spotlight on the best and worst of our social structures; from the heroic dedication of our first responders, to the disproportionate deaths of our most vulnerable. Finally, on a personal level, we are all connected in the quest to stay flexible in mind and resilient in body, while we the illusion of certainty shatters around us.

The following are some mental health mandates to help adapt to the daily (hourly!) seismic shifts in our internal microcosmos, without succumbing to despair.

1. Acknowledge the Pain: Denial is like a shapeshifter for pain; it turns into something other than its true form. For example, if you're feeling scared about a statistic you heard on the news, but are too preoccupied to take a breather, you might just snap at the next person who interrupts your flow. Objectively, that person may have done something annoying, but under duress, it boils your blood! Today: Take time to sit with your feelings. It doesn't have to be a formal meditation session. It can take the form of; a few intentional deep breaths in and out, putting your hand on your heart for a silent invocation, or writing some thoughts in your journal.

2. Make time for Joy: Yes, there is tremendous suffering in the world and today, it seems like it's right outside your door. However, dwelling only darkness, prevents us from recharging our inner light. Today: Find at least an hour for guilt-free enjoyment and really be in the moment. If it's an hour of tv, don't watch while scrolling social media, let yourself be transported. Ideally, it's enjoyment that also leaves you feeling refreshed. (The Happiness Lab podcast is a sure winner.)



3. **Look for the Good:** It might be harder these days to notice good in the world, it might take a concerted effort to spot, but on the whole, humans rise to social challenges by supporting each other in loving and innovative ways. Today: Take a trip to www.goodnewsnetwork.org, check out John Krasinski's "Some Good News" on YouTube, or follow Instagram's #CovidKindness.

4. **Practice Gratitude:** This is not necessarily equated with belief in a higher power and it not the same as saying "everything happens for a reason". Gratitude is a mindfulness tool that retrains your brain to recognize all that is good in your life, right here, right now. There is clinical evidence proving that a gratitude practice, releases the "happiness chemicals" in the brain and can even boost your physical immunity. Today: Take 5-10 minutes to record what Three Good Things that you are grateful for. Try to make them positive, as opposed to the absence of negative. For example, saying, "my robust health" vs "that I'm not sick".

5. **Create:** Creativity is our birthright, a dependable source of joy and an important means of communication. By the very nature of our individuality, our creation will be something the world has never seen before. Forget the judgment and let your inner child come out and play. Today: Brush off those piano keys, grab that faded box of crayons, whip up some cookies in the kitchen. It doesn't have to be a masterpiece and it doesn't have to be for anyone else. Creative expression is like a spiritual oil change, where stagnant energy gets replaced with fresh fuel.

6. **Connect:** No, sadly, we can only "reach out and touch someone" in the Ma Bell sense. But, back when that slogan was coined, it only meant to listening to a disembodied voice from the extent of our phone cord. Now the possibilities are limited only to the imagination. Today: Skype your best friend from middle school, play online pool with an old neighbor, stream a yoga class with your sister. Get creative with your social contact!

7. **Get Help:** Sometimes, we cannot do it on our own. There's no shame in needing help and help is waiting. Feel free to reach out to your social worker for the Shames JCC on the Hudson, whenever you need. Remember, every member and employee receive three free, confidential counseling sessions and unlimited referrals. Today: Add jconvissor@shamesjcc.org to your contacts list and don't be afraid to reach out any time, with a request for a session, or a help acquiring needed resources.



Contact:
Jennifer Convissor, LCSW
914.366.7898 x1162
jconvissor@shamesjcc.org



371 S. Broadway
Tarrytown, NY 10591
914.366.7898

