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INSIGHT

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Don't Suffer Mental Health Issues in Silence

Sometimes we can talk to family members about emotional challenges or when mental health issues get the better of us (especially in the current coronavirus climate). Friends might be good listeners, as well. Even some colleagues are known to give great advice.

Those same types of people *also* could be the ones warning us not to broadcast our troubles or advising us to just buck up. Or we might feel like we don't want to burden them.

But there is no need to suffer mental problems silently. The old stigma of being seen as weak or incapable is largely gone, helped by many well-known writers, actors and politicians being open about their struggles with, and treatments for, everything from depression to chronic shoplifting. Going to a therapist is now seen as a positive step in most people's lives.

"Therapy is a unique relationship and what makes it valuable sets it apart from friendships, working partnerships, family connections and love affairs," says Carl Sherman, author of *How to Go to Therapy: Making the Most of Professional Help*.

In his book, Sherman describes therapy as a balance in which two people are "collaborating on a single project: helping you deal with your problems and achieve the change you want. There is no other agenda."

It's the simplicity of that agenda, combined with a structured schedule, confidentiality and trust, that make this unique relationship work so well for so many people. Rather than proof that someone is "sick," it is a sign of good health to make a commitment to change.

Some people still believe a therapist will make them lie on a couch. While some therapists might have couches in their offices, you choose

where to sit. Or you can do it virtually. You choose what to say. You choose when to say it. And, nowadays, there is an incredible number of ways to explore problems. Beyond conventional talk therapy, there is art therapy, music therapy, somatic therapy—even laughter therapy—to name just a few. For every kind of problem, and every kind of person, there is a therapeutic healing modality that fits.

The strength of therapy is that there are no strings attached. In his book, Sherman offers some further therapeutic relationship benefits:

1. Safety. If the relationship is right, you can feel safe to reveal your fears, dreams and fantasies without fear of repercussions or judgment on the part of the therapist. Unlike telling a friend or family member, your words to a therapist won't come back to haunt you.

2. Confidentiality. The therapist is bound by ethics and law (except in a few well-defined cases) not to reveal what you have said during sessions. This adds to the feeling of safety and trust, and aids in people making changes.

3. Learning. Therapy can be seen as a deeply educational experience, in which a therapist acts like a coach or teacher to help the client see the world—inner and outer—in new and positive ways.

Into each life some rain must fall, and we all have felt deluged at least once in our lives. Grief, loss, anger, financial hardship, relationship problems, stress—all of these are a normal part of life. So is seeking help when coping is just too hard. It's also normal to be a little afraid of what friends and family might say about seeing a therapist. But, in the end, it's your life, and you know best how to make it a richer, happier and more fulfilling one—with a little help. *

10 Good Ways to Manage Stress in Uncertain Times

Stress is an unwelcome guest anytime, but in uncharted circumstances like we find ourselves in now, stress is ratcheted up substantially.

The good news is that, even in uncertain times like now, we can manage the stress by the choices we make. Below are 10 of the very best ways to lower stress—and raise our joy in life—no matter what.

- 1. Breathe...deeply.** Your 1st step!
- 2. Lighten up.** Laugh, smile, be playful. Find the humor.
- 3. Change** locations or activities or people you're with, if possible.
- 4. Get physical.** Exercise, walk, play a game, weed/garden.
- 5. Watch** your sugar, caffeine, fatty foods, alcohol. Don't over/under eat. Drink water. Eat fruit/veggies.
- 6. Get it out.** Talk to a friend, counselor. Write it out.
- 7. Have fun!** Recreate: movies, games, virtual museums. Do something creative.
- 8. Relax** in the tub, take a nap or a shower, sit in the sun/shade, do nothing.
- 9. Get a massage**—a backrub, footrub. Or have a stretch.
- 10. Do something nice or kind for someone or the planet.** It doesn't have to be big; it can be anonymous.

And here's a bonus tip: Immerse yourself in nature. Connect to spirit. Appreciate beauty. *

A Letter From

Non F. Schmitt



So much has changed—and so rapidly—as this coronavirus crisis has evolved. It’s almost head-spinning. And it’s affecting all of us on so many levels. First, here’s a wish that you and your cherished people are safe and well.

This sudden shift—accompanied by uncertainty, fear, anxiety, isolation—can lead to an experience of real vulnerability. Which may sound awful, but feeling vulnerable can actually have positive aspects.

As it turns out, acknowledging your vulnerability and seeking help is a strong step on your own behalf toward healing. The bottom line, as the page 1 feature explores, is that you don’t need to silently suffer. If you’re dealing with emotional issues and need some help, reach out.

Seeking help is also a strong step toward developing the emotional resilience needed to face any challenges that may be arising for you out of this Covid-19 situation. The page 3 article looks at emotional resilience and suggests ways to enhance your ability to bounce back in difficult times.

Test where you are on managing anxiety and overwhelm today by taking the quiz. And dig into the Top 10 for tips on dealing with that stress.

Finally, it’s important to take care of yourself right now. If you find yourself distracted and unable to sleep, the back-page article explores what to do (and not do) to get healthful, renewing sleep—so important to good mental health and a healthy immune system. Be well!

How Do You Manage Being Anxious and Overwhelmed?



Overwhelm and anxiety, like many are feeling today, can make you feel powerless and immobile. Everything feels too big. Decision-making is confusing. Just making dinner becomes a monumental effort. Below are 14 ways to deal with these feelings. Answer true/false to each to see how well you’re doing and what you can do to feel better.

True False

- 1. I try to remember that I don’t have to do everything myself. I ask others for help and gather a support team about me.
- 2. As often as I can remember, I stop for a moment and take several deep, relaxing breaths.
- 3. I say “No” to new requests for my time, and I try to renegotiate previous commitments so that I can regroup.
- 4. I resist the frantic voice inside that yells, “You don’t have time!” and take a little break to sit or lie down for a bit, because I know it will make me feel as though I actually have more time.
- 5. I watch a funny video. (Laughter has a very positive effect on brain chemistry.)
- 6. I light a candle and keep it near me.
- 7. I go outdoors for a few moments or even a few hours. Taking time to notice the glorious details of nature—a leaf, a snowflake, a ladybug—is very regenerative.
- 8. Even if for only 10 minutes, I do some form of movement—dancing, jogging, walking, jumping jacks. (Exercise increases adrenaline and endorphins, the body’s natural antidepressants.)
- 9. When I need to drown out the negative chatter in my overwhelmed state, I sing quietly or hum to myself. It soothes me and helps me focus on “one step at a time.”
- 10. I have a practice of meditating or praying each morning, which keeps me tethered to myself during the times that overwhelm wants to scatter my energy to the wind.
- 11. I write in my journal as fast as I can for 15 minutes without editing or judging; this “brain dump” helps clear my mind and move away from overwhelm.
- 12. On my walks (with the dog or alone), I whisper to myself all the things for which I forgive myself.
- 13. When the pressure of overwhelm feels unbearable, I listen to evocative violin, cello or piano music that helps me to cry. The crying helps wash away the overwhelm and bring me back to my strength.
- 14. I keep a list of all the things that help me re-connect with myself, that help me re-collect and re-focus my energy inside, so that when overwhelm begins to visit, I can remind myself of things that have worked in the past.

Overcoming overwhelm isn’t really about measuring accomplishment. It’s about connecting with what has meaning for us, with what feeds and enlivens us. Feeling connected then connects us to the natural fuel for getting things done. If you’d like some help working through overwhelm and aligning better with your values and needs, don’t hesitate to call. *

7 Traits of People Who Demonstrate Resilience During Life's Curve Balls

This global pandemic—with its unexpected impacts on our health, freedom of movement, finances, etc.—is a quintessential example of a "gotcha" event. They come out of the blue and cause major disruptions. Most of us have experienced other "gotcha" events at one time or another in our lives.

For some, the impact of hard times is overwhelming and recovery can be painfully slow. Others show resilience and are admirably able to glide through these times fairly easily, bouncing back to a normal life again quickly. Resilience—the strength required to adapt to change—acts as our internal compass so we can resourcefully navigate an upset.



When unexpected events turn life upside down, it's the degree to which our resiliency comes into play that gives these "make-or-break" situations the opportunity for growth. The good news is that each of us has the capacity to reorganize our lives after a disruption and to achieve new levels of strength and meaningfulness. In fact, life disruptions are not necessarily a bad thing because they help us grow and meet future challenges in our lives.

It's easy to feel vulnerable in the midst of chaos because of not knowing what lies ahead. But learning how to adapt during chaos strengthens your ability to meet stresses in the future. It's a lot like a bone that was once fragile or broken, and is now strong from being used.

So how can you learn to become more resilient? Learning how to put closure to previous life experiences is often key for bouncing back. In addition, developing resilience depends on many factors. Let's take a look at 7 key characteristics of people who demonstrate resilience during life's curve balls.

#1—A Sense of Hope and Trust in the World

Resilient people rely on their belief in the basic goodness of the world and trust that things will turn out all right in the end. This positive attitude allows them to weather times when everything seems bleak and to look for and accept the support that is out there. This approach toward the world gives them the ability to hope for a better future.

#2—Interpreting Experiences in a New Light

The ability to look at a situation in a new way (a skill called "reframing") can minimize the impact of a difficult situation. Resilient people take a creative approach toward solving a problem, and don't always use an old definition for a new challenge.

#3—A Meaningful System of Support

One of the best ways to endure a crisis is to have the support of another person who can listen and validate your feelings. Knowing that others care and will come to your support lessens feeling isolated, especially when tackling a problem alone. It's important to choose people you trust. Don't be surprised if it takes several friends, each of whom can provide different kinds of support. Resilient people aren't stoic loners. They know the value of expressing their fears and frustrations, as well as receiving support, coaching, or guidance from friends, family or a professional.

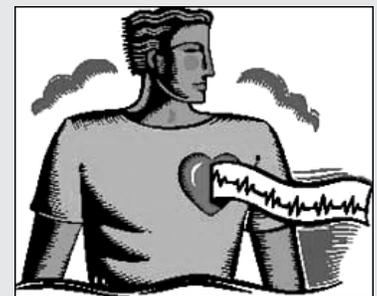
#4—Mastery and Control Over Your Destiny

You may not be able to predict the future, but you can tackle a problem instead of feeling at the mercy of forces outside of your control. Resilient people know that ultimately their survival and the integrity of their life values depend on their ability to take action rather than remain passive. Tough times call for you to tap into your own sense of personal responsibility.

#5—Self-Reflection and Insight

Life's experiences provide fertile ground for learning.

Asking yourself questions that invite introspection can open a door to new understanding and appreciation of who you are and what you stand for. Giving voice to your thoughts and feelings can invite



insight and help transform the meaning of a problem into something useful. Resilient people learn from life situations, and they do not succumb to punishing themselves because of decisions made in the past.

#6—A Wide Range of Interests

People who show resilience in the face of adversity are those who have a diversity of interests in their lives. They're open to new experiences and ideas. Because their lives are rich, they can use their variety of experiences to find relief from the single-mindedness and worry which often accompanies a crisis.

#7—Sense of Humor

Have you ever had a wry laugh during a difficult situation? The ability to see the absurdity, irony, or genuine humor in a situation stimulates your sense of hope and possibility. Humor has both psychological and physical benefits in relieving stress because it encourages a swift change in your perception of your circumstances—and when your thoughts change, your mood follows. *

The DOs and DON'Ts of Getting Healthful, Renewing Sleep—Consistently

It's bad enough that we have shaved off an average of 2 precious hours of sleep a night over the last half a century—but then add on top of that the stress and anxiety of the recent Covid-19 crisis, and our sleep declines even more, both in number of hours and in quality.

Of course, most of us know we should sleep more. But still we burn the midnight oil. We get up way before the kids just to get things done. It's hard

to get to sleep. It's hard to stay asleep once we get there.

And while most of us know that too little sleep makes us cranky, less focused and less available to those who need us, did you know this?

- Bodies deprived of sleep produce less leptin, an appetite-regulating hormone; this increases our craving for sweets and salty carbohydrates.
- Shortened sleep produces metabolic changes. These may lead

to diabetes or may alter the nervous system in a way that could contribute to high blood pressure and heart-rhythm irregularities.

- Insomnia substantially increases the risk of developing depression.

In short, not getting enough rest can affect both our mental and physical health much more than we thought. Here are some DOs and DON'Ts that will help you get healthful, renewing sleep more often.



DO structure your sleep. Try to go to bed and arise at the same times every day. Irregular hours can throw off the internal biological clock.

DO create a soothing bedtime routine. Watching the news or reading the latest page-turner are not good sleep inducers. Meditation or soothing music help bring the day to a relaxing close.

DON'T work, eat or watch TV in bed. Keep your bedroom for sleep.

DO keep it quiet, dark and cool, and your feet warm. However, within five minutes of waking, expose yourself to bright light.

DON'T exercise or eat heavily within several hours of bedtime. Both energize the body. However, DO exercise in the late afternoon or early evening. This reduces tension and makes falling asleep easier.

DO avoid stimulants and alcohol late in the day. Caffeine, nicotine, sugary snacks and alcohol all can cause wakefulness.

DO head off potential anxieties at the bedroom door. Make lists of chores or tasks for the next day, and/or gather things you will need. (It's like laying out your school clothes!) If worries keep you awake, write your concerns down and list possible solutions.

DON'T look at your clock if you wake up in the night. Figuring how much sleep you're missing intensifies the wee-hours stress of insomnia. Cover your clock, if you need to. *



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