

Field Notes in the Time of Covid-19

We are all in sacred space right now. We are in the "In Between Time" of what was and what will be. In slowing and tending to our community, large and small, we hold a larger space for God in our awareness; we act for the common welfare. Whether you feel it or not, it is an act of sacrifice and love.

Psychologically and Spiritually, you are right where you are supposed to be. You have lived your whole life in order to arrive at this place and time. You have what you need to experience and live through this time. You are currently creating, building, growing and strengthening what you need to move into the next stage of this communal experience. This is true even if you are struggling right now. Stay with the struggle. Keep moving forward.

Anxiety:

Remember that anxiety is the natural human resting state. We notice it when our sympathetic nervous system, the part of our system that assesses and responds to threat, gets activated.

Our four primary response options tend to be:
Fight, Flight, Freeze, Appease

- Fight looks like stocking up, refusing to stay in place, avoiding recommendations.
- Flight looks like denial of science/medical information/recommendations. One demands that life returns to the [old normal]. One over estimates one's chances.
- Freeze looks like avoidance. Overuse of screen time, increased use of alcohol, excessive sleep, etc in order to tune out or stay unconscious. One refuses to [cannot] take in information or minimizes the speaker/scientist/doctor. One is afraid to leave the house.
- Appease looks like "doing everything right" which in itself can be paralyzing. It can also indicate a mindset that follows the thought that if I do everything "Right" nothing bad will happen to me [I must get everyone I love to do the right thing too so nothing bad will happen to them].

Note: the key is to understand one's tendencies and work with them to achieve a manageable balance. We are all floating between these on any given day right now. These become problematic when they become the guiding choice point of our behavior with others or in psychological isolation.

Grief is ever present right now. We have all let go of something of importance to us such as community, in person worship, hugs, livelihood, people, places and things. We have all lost something or someone that shaped our lives. Grief is the time it takes for

our mind and spirit to cross that liminal space between "what was" and "what is." The before/after moment is often just a moment in time. Our ability to cross that divide, that "moment" can take a bit.

Trouble sleeping: [Follow all of the suggestions on-line to cultivate good sleep hygiene] This is one of those moments in time in which your mind has an opportunity to cue you in to some of the deeper processes or material running in the background. Pause, when you cannot sleep or when you awaken from a dream that is [odd, rich, unnerving, unusually pleasant] and attend to the material offered by your psyche. We ignore our thoughts, fears and concerns with distraction and goal oriented thinking. You may find that sleep is attainable if you give your mind an opportunity for expression. Write, meditate, review. If this is a scary or unnerving practice, bookend your writing/mindfulness time with prayer and intention.

Note: Writing [pen to paper] gives our system a tangible/tactile/embodied experience and organizes our thinking in way that screen writing does not. [This is true for digital natives.] When writing this material out, write on scrap or note paper. After writing out all of the material presented to your thinking mind, review it and pick out the nuggets that are important or worth attending to. Write those in a journal or book for future work whether it is attended to tomorrow or in 3 years.

Best practice for mental health and physical health: Walking, biking, treadmill, climbing stairs. These bi-pedal and bi-lateral movements allow both brain hemispheres to connect and work things out systemically. While it does this, neurochemicals are adapted to manage distress and still anxiety. EMDR [Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing] is one of our best treatment strategies for PTSD. It accesses the power of bi-lateral brain hemisphere engagement. While walking/running/stair climbing is not EMDR, it is bi-lateral stimulation for the brain.

Fatigue and working from home: Thank you Andrea Mysen.

https://curtthompsonmd.com/a-body-of-work/?fbclid=IwAR1KXz6rE7s4Zn0KqRaVpSOjb0qIw6KOnHcr84zMZdzrbY4nl8nrHG_z22
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Fatigue and sheltering in place while homeschooling: There are many resources for parents and self-care, management of energy, time, mind and body. Give yourself permission not to do this perfectly. This may be a time in which institutional learning is not as strong. However, the life lessons in play are rich and formative. Going for a walk and noticing what we are surrounded by is as important as algebra.

Neurochemistry and management of mood: Almost everything we do influences our neurochemistry. In my world we reference good or poor mental hygiene to discuss what we attend to, what we put in our bodies and how we self-regulate. Healthy eating

is a significant part of a healthy psychological regimen. Rebecca Katz, author of *The Healthy Mind Cookbook*, lists out each ingredient of the recipes offered and explains how each ingredient serves neurochemistry and brain function. Each of her recipes is formulated for taste and mental health. Her research is solid and these recipes are delicious.

<https://www.rebeccakatz.com/the-healthy-mind-cookbook>

Personal narrative: Be curious about what happens next. Do not embrace the presumptive narrative of media or speculation about our future. Be curious. Make space in your heart and mind for a different but manageable future. Everything is going to be alright. [Remember: We may need to change the definition of what "all right" is.] Allow space in your mind for hope. Trust in your ability to pivot and respond to what Life asks of you.

We are given more than we can cope with. That's a fact of Life. The benefit of living in community, even if we choose to be physically separate for a time, is that we cope with the help of others. When we are overwhelmed or feel unable to handle everything we are asked to manage, we can and must turn to each other for help. Each of us will participate as we can with our personal gifts and abilities whether this is intentional or not. Sometimes the most powerful thing we can do for each other is acknowledge that we have no idea what comes next or how to move through the foreseeable future. Our common experience is just that: communal. A burden carried/experienced by others is a burden shared. Equally [and sometime more] important: joy and abundance carried and experienced is magnified. The key is to reach out and know that we are not alone.