COVID-19 and our response to uncertainty, fear and disruption

Special Webinar Presentation
by Randy Kratz, FEI

today we will address:

- Impact of uncertainty and stress on our brains
- How to avoid becoming overwhelmed
- Being resilient despite the distance between us
- Finding our best selves in times like these
what is a traumatic event?

An event that is outside the usual range of experience for most people and would be markedly distressing to almost anyone.

Examples:
- Medical emergency
- Serious injury or death
- Suicide
- Witnessing traumatic events
- Severe weather
- Bomb threat
- Civil unrest / Protest
- Major accident
- Building collapse
- Fire / Explosion
- Shooting
- Public Health Emergency
how did we get here?

change
uncertainty
disruption

fear response

stress switches
get stuck “wide open”

Home
Work
Relationships
It’s normal

- To want to know what’s happening
- To feel stressed, helpless and unsafe
- To sense a loss of control
- To have similar feelings from the past come back

brain is plastic

DNA
Thoughts/Emotions
Experience
Chemistry/Structure
An important part of coping with the stress of uncertainty is to acknowledge its effects on you.

Please take a moment and share how you have been impacted personally by COVID-19:

Individual variables

- Traits and Predispositions
  - DNA and the motherboard
  - Resiliency and temperament
  - Startle response, anxiety traits

- Experiences and learned responses
  - Family patterns
  - Traumas
Influence, not Destiny

Individual signs of distress

Physical
- Sleep difficulties
- Headaches
- Exhaustion
- Stomachaches
- Increased susceptibility to illness

Behavioral
- Increased irritability
- Difficulty separating work and personal life
- Increased isolation and avoidance
- Ineffective or self-destructive coping behaviors
- Increased sense of personal vulnerability—health, money
Isolation and loneliness can produce chemical changes that alter the function of the brain over time.
personal resilience

Your effectiveness in working with and responding to others will be determined by how well you take care of yourself.

“A human moment occurs anytime two or more people are together, paying attention to one another. These connections are the key to what counts in life, from a happy family to a successful business to a sense of inner peace, even to physical health and longevity.”

Edward M. Hallowell, M.D., Connect
choose to change your response: ABC model

Activating event: A situation occurs

Belief: Reframed belief positively affects your perception

Consequences: Consequences of your beliefs occur

tend to and befriend yourself

- Limit exposure to media coverage – trusted resource
- Connect and communicate often – call, text, etc.
- Practice daily healthy coping skills – exercise, diet, relaxation
- Create routines – control what you can
- Discuss feelings and thoughts with those you trust
- Utilize personal strengths, resources, supports
tend to and befriend your family

- Surface and acknowledge fears openly – without supporting misconceptions
- Reassure and discuss safety – physical and psychological
- Talk about and share what you do that helps
- Reduce or limit media exposure
- Create and/or continue a family routine and structure

chat box question #2

How can we support each other in times like these?
Help yourself and others

- Stay connected:

Manage each day, hour and moment

Learn something new – be creative

Keep a positive outlook

- Expect good to multiply and bad to pass

in summary

find support resources

Work-related (supervisors, HR, peers) support

Friends/Family

Healthcare

Clergy

Others

FEI – Your Employee Assistance Program Benefit
The “best medicine”

“ Anything that’s human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable.

When we can talk about our feelings/reactions, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary.

The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone.”

homework

What will I do differently, starting now, to manage the stress of uncertainty?
thank you