


Chapter 4

Mindful Living When Life Brings Uncertainty

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ABSTRACT

Unforeseen life stressors can bring disillusionment as affected persons attempt to adapt to the unexpected and curtail associated negative emotions. Independent of formal diagnoses of anxiety and depression, anyone can be impacted by stressors in their personal and professional lives that affect mood, functionality, and cognitive functioning. Mindful living teaches one to address mental distress when unpredictable life events occur that are both unsettling and traumatic to the psyche. The coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) was an unforeseen event that has disrupted the normalcy of the lives of affected people worldwide. Trauma related to unforeseen events like COVID-19, can destabilize persons that already have histories of trauma and mental illness.

UNFORESEEN LIFE EVENTS

In March of 2020, the unforeseen event impacting people worldwide, was the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). At-home regulations were put in place by countries to contain the spread of COVID-19. These at-home regulations led to business closures and limited access to outdoor facilities and recreation, travel, school closures, and loss of employment when employment duties were unable to be completed remotely from home by the internet.

The at-home regulations of COVID-19 restrictions led to people experiencing isolation as their personal, professional, family, and faith communities were

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disrupted. The disruption of the normal and isolation created disillusionment. For persons with prior history of trauma and depression, isolation can worsen anxiety and depressive symptoms.

Trauma

With over 3.0 million deaths (World Health Organization, 2021) worldwide from COVID-19, people have experienced emotional trauma from actual loss of persons in their lives and fear of contagion. With the implementation of vaccinations for COVID-19, deaths and contagion continued worldwide. However, death rates related to COVID-19 have significantly declined.

Trauma is the emotional response a person has following a difficult event such as a natural disaster (e.g., hurricane, earthquake, flood or tornado), accident (e.g., motor vehicle accident or accidental shooting), or molestation (e.g., violent rape by a stranger or incestuous rape). Persons affected by trauma(s) are initially in shock and denial about the event. Over time, the recall of these traumatic events causes affected persons to experience physiological symptoms such as gastrointestinal problems and headaches, and psychological symptoms such as flashbacks, labile emotions, and strained relationships (American Psychological Association, 2021).

Vulnerability

Persons that have pre-existing trauma or traumas, can be more susceptible to re-experiencing these difficult events during times of heightened stress. Isolation occurring as a result of the COVID-19 regulations sanctioning the pandemic at-home orders, can contribute to affected persons re-experiencing flashbacks, physiological symptoms, mood lability, and difficulty communicating and engaging in meaningful relationships. Unforeseen disruptions in the life of persons affected by trauma(s) can lead to heightened stress, anxiety, depression, and a psychotic episode (Bhavsar, 2019; Koyanagi et al., 2016; Linscott & van Os, 2013; McGrath et al., 2016; McGrath et al., 2017).

There are times when life events seem overwhelming and impact the seemingly most well-adjusted psyches. Sudden changes in a person's daily activities can either lead to flexibility in changing one's plans or cause one to become inflexible secondary to fear or anxiety. Booij et al. (2018) examined affective reactivity to daily life stress in relationship to positive psychotic and depressive symptoms. Depressive and psychotic symptoms can co-occur. Booij et al. (2018) applied data from a sampling study with a general population sample of 411 with three measurements for subjective stress; experienced physical discomfort, appraisal of activities, and appraisal of social interactions. Applying mixed model analyses, a comparison

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