

Community Institute for Psychotherapy

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2019-2020 News & Notes



June 2020 News and Notes

Checking In: How Are You Doing?

By Robin Joy Berenson, PhD, LMFT

“How are you?” is a frequently asked question, especially these days. In such strange times, it may be hard for us to know ourselves.

“There’s a difference between experiencing sadness about the current state of the world or feeling a little off because of a disrupted routine versus struggling to function on a daily basis, or even giving in to self-destructive tendencies,” writes Kate Mooney¹. She recommends spending a few moments each day checking in with ourselves to assess how we are doing, physically and emotionally.

For instance, how well are you taking care of your physical needs? Are you sleeping enough, too little or too much? How are your eating habits; do you take time for regular nutritious meals? What about other self-care, such as exercise, hygiene, and so on? Are there any red flags, such as drinking or overeating, or other behaviors that worry you?

What about your thoughts and emotions? Do you have someone with whom to share them? It’s important to acknowledge feelings, especially negative ones, rather than stifling them or negating their value.

One simple way to check in on thoughts and feelings is to keep a journal. “Oftentimes, we know we’re stressed but avoid taking the time to figure out why,” writes Aytakin Tank², “Committing your thoughts and emotions to paper can aid in pinpointing the root of your anxiety.”

An article on the Mayo Clinic website³, “Resilience: Build skills to endure hardship,” similarly recommends journaling as a means of gaining a useful perspective, especially as a way to draw on inner strengths. “Learn from experience. Think of how you’ve coped with hardships in the past. Consider the skills and strategies that helped you

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through difficult times. You might even write about past experiences in a journal to help you identify positive and negative behavior patterns — and guide your future behavior.”

Resilience, the article states, “is the ability to adapt to difficult situations. . . . [which] can help protect you from various mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety.” Other tips given on how to build resilience include:

“Get connected. Building strong, positive relationships with loved ones and friends can provide you with needed support and acceptance in good and bad times. . . .

“Make every day meaningful. Do something that gives you a sense of accomplishment and purpose every day. Set goals to help you look toward the future with meaning.

“Remain hopeful. You can't change the past, but you can always look toward the future. Accepting and even anticipating change makes it easier to adapt and view new challenges with less anxiety.

“Take care of yourself. Tend to your own needs and feelings. Participate in activities and hobbies you enjoy. . . . Practice stress management and relaxation techniques, such as yoga, meditation, guided imagery, deep breathing or prayer.

“Be proactive. Don't ignore your problems. Instead, figure out what needs to be done, make a plan, and take action. Although it can take time to recover from a major setback, traumatic event or loss, know that your situation can improve if you work at it.”

Benefits of Therapy

If you find yourself struggling with overwhelming emotions, negative thoughts, or other difficulties, tele-therapy can help you address these. Whether short-term or long-term, psychotherapy can offer many benefits. As the Mayo Clinic article points out, “being able to reach out to others for support is a key part of being resilient.”

Here are just a few benefits of therapy:

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Therapy offers a safe space to share your thoughts and feelings with someone professionally trained to listen and respond, prioritizing your needs and concerns. This can be a place to explore and heal from trauma.

Your therapist's feedback can help you better understand your reactions and feelings, which can make them more manageable. It can help you discern patterns in relationships and thinking and identify choices.

Therapy is a place for you and your therapist to brainstorm and strategize what steps to take to move forward and address the challenges you face. Gaining a new perspective can give you a more positive, hopeful outlook.

These weeks and months are a time like no other in our lifetimes. It's important that we make the best of where we find ourselves, and stay healthy, physically and mentally.

¹ https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-to-tell-need-online-therapy_1_5eb2c820c5b632e78399b9ad

² https://www.fastcompany.com/90508949/these-stress-busting-techniques-will-help-you-weather-chaotic-times?partner=rss&utm_campaign=rss+fastcompany&utm_content=rss&utm_medium=feed&utm_source=rss

³ <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/resilience-training/in-depth/resilience/art-20046311>