



Southern
New Hampshire
University

Care for the Caregivers: The Impact of the Pandemic on Wellness speaking Trauma-Informed Language

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Let's take a test:

Your answers should be about the last 30 days. We will score the questions after so please number your questions beginning with 1, ending with 10. There are no right or wrong answers. Let's begin:

1: In the LAST MONTH, how often have you:
Been upset because of something that happened
unexpectedly?

Never

Almost Never

Sometimes

Fairly Often

Often

2: In the LAST MONTH, how often have you:
Felt that you were unable to control important things
in your life?

Never

Almost Never

Sometimes

Fairly Often

Often

3: In the LAST MONTH, how often have you:
Felt nervous and 'stressed'?

Never

Almost Never

Sometimes

Fairly Often

Often

4: In the LAST MONTH, how often have you:
Felt confident about your ability to handle your
personal problems?

Never

Almost Never

Sometimes

Fairly Often

Often

5: In the LAST MONTH, how often have you:
Felt that things were going your way?

Never

Almost Never

Sometimes

Fairly Often

Often

6: In the LAST MONTH, how often have you:
Found that you could NOT cope with all the things you
had to do?

Never

Almost Never

Sometimes

Fairly Often

Often

7: In the LAST MONTH, how often have you:
Been able to control irritations in your life?

Never

Almost Never

Sometimes

Fairly Often

Often

8: In the LAST MONTH, how often have you:
Felt that you were on top of things?

Never

Almost Never

Sometimes

Fairly Often

Often

9: In the LAST MONTH, how often have you:
Been angered because of things that happened that
were out of your control?

Never

Almost Never

Sometimes

Fairly Often

Often

10: In the LAST MONTH, how often have you:
Felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could
not overcome them?

Never

Almost Never

Sometimes

Fairly Often

Often

For questions 1,2,3,6,9, & 10, total your score according to the chart below:

| Never | Almost Never | Sometim es | Fairly Often | Very Often |
|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

For questions 4,5,7,& 8, total your score according to the chart below:

| Never | Almost Never | Sometim es | Fairly Often | Very Often |
|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

Interpret your scores, take the total of the two and compare:

| Very Low Health Concern | Low Health Concern | Average Health Concern | High Health Concern | Very High Health Concerns |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 0-7 | 8-11 | 12-15 | 16-20 | 21+ |

What is happening in our brain when we feel stressed?



Cortex: Thinking Integrates input from all 3 parts. Cognition, beliefs, language, thought, speech.

Limbic Area: Emotional Assesses risk. Expression and mediation of emotions and feelings, including emotions linked to attachment.

Survival Brain: Instinctual Carries out "fight, flight, & freeze." Unconscious. Digestion, reproduction, circulation, breathing - responds to sensation.

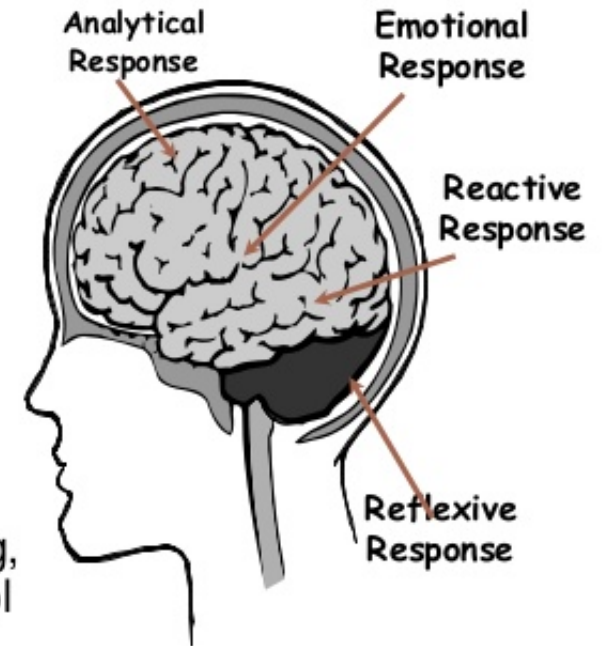
UPSTAIRS/DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN

✘ Downstairs brain:

- Brain stem and limbic region
- Basic bodily functions, emotional reactivity, attachment, fight/flight/freeze

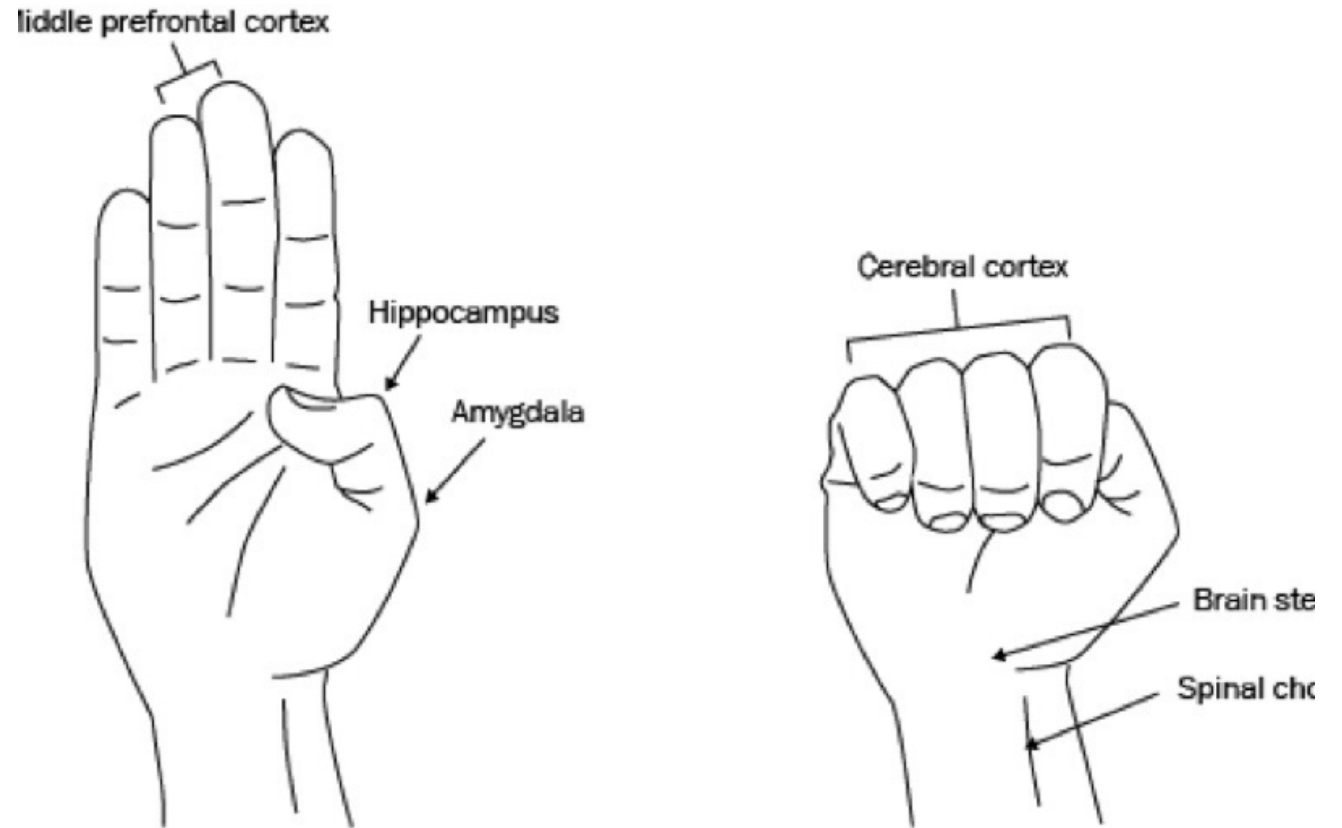
✘ Upstairs brain:

- Cerebral cortex
- Decision making, planning, self-understanding, control over emotions and body, empathy, morality, executive functioning



Visual Interpretation

What happens when your logical brain is separated from your emotional brain?



Hand model courtesy of Dan Siegel

Generally recognized for emotional resilience, healthcare workers are now facing complex mental and physical hardships in the face of COVID-19. The pandemic is presenting clinicians with workplace hardships and moral dilemmas. Consequently, healthcare workers experience emotional exhaustion, which may lead to clinical errors, lack of empathy in treating clients, lower productivity, and higher turnover rates (Qasem Surrati, et al., 2020).

Qasem Surrati, A. M., Asad Mansuri, F. M., & Ayadh Alihabib, A. A. (2020). Psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on health care workers. *Journal of Taibah University Medical Sciences*, 15(6), 536–543. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.snhu.edu/10.1016/j.jtumed.2020.10.005>

Healthcare workers will need to learn to both recognize signs of hardships as well as learn to implement strategies to avoid poor outcomes, burnout, and other consequences as the strain of the pandemic continues.

Let's consider....

Marta is a clinical mental health counselor. Due to Covid-19, her work has transitioned to telehealth. Her last client of the day is often long winded and Marta regrets scheduling her at the end of the day and feels resentful that her day will likely go long. Marta dials into the appointment 15 minutes late secretly hoping that the client will have hung up.

Neil is a nurse working in the Covid-19 unit of his local hospital. He works 12-hour shifts caring for seriously ill patients. This week, his husband Paul, was diagnosed with Covid-19. Neil is so worried about Paul that he is easily distracted and failed to document medication that he administered to a seriously ill patient. His shift manager calls him out in front of his colleagues.

Signs and Symptoms of Emotional & Physical Exhaustion

- Chronic Fatigue (feeling tired, depleted, chronic sense of dread)
- Insomnia (difficulty falling asleep, inability to stay asleep)
- Forgetfulness or Lack of Concentration (inability to focus or accomplish tasks)
- Physical symptoms (head or body aches; racing heart; gastric upset)
- Frequent illness (diminished immune system)
- Loss of appetite (lack of hunger, inability to tolerate food)
- Anxiety (tension, worry, edginess, inability to work)
- Depression (sad, worthless, hopeless)
- Anger (tension, irritability, interpersonal outbursts)

Paul is the clinical director of an assisted living facility. His residents have shown a dramatic increase in depression and anxiety due to isolation and fear. Several residents have died due to Covid-19 which has exacerbated distress in the clients and the employees. Despite extreme fatigue and a persistent headache, Paul has worked tirelessly to meet the needs of his residents who he considers family. This has led to 70-hour work weeks with no increase in pay, yet Paul feels like he is failing.

Violet is the supervisor of field experience for two dozen master's level students participating in internship. Many students have lost placements due to Covid-19 and are extremely upset about the potential delay in completing degree requirements. Site supervisors have been non-responsive to Violet's outreach and Violet's own administrator tells her to "figure it out". Violet feels completely unsupported with an impossible task. Violet has come to hate her job and is unable to even imagine how this will ever get resolved.

Additional Signs of Hardship

Cynicism and Detachment

- Loss of Enjoyment (not wanting to go to work or desiring to leave)
- Pessimism (negative self talk or glass half empty perspective)
- Isolation (feeling disconnected, not returning calls, avoidance)

Ineffectiveness or Lack of Accomplishment

- Feelings of Apathy (a sense nothing is going right or nothing matters)
- Increased Irritability (feeling ineffective, unimportant or useless)
- Lack of Productivity (incomplete projects or endless to do list)

Individual Wellness Strategies – The Basics

- Stay Hydrated
- Take Restroom Breaks
- Healthy Eating and Snacking
- Exercise (Formal or Fun)
- Go outside!
- Sleep-Friendly Environment
- Keeping in Contact
- Avoid destructive coping (shopping, eating, drinking, social media)

<https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/765974>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24316614/>

Individual Strategies - Techniques

- 4-7-8 Breathing, Belly Breathing, Yoga and Meditation
- Humming / Dancing
- Progressive Relaxation and Body Scanning
- Reframing, Laughing and Self-Talk
- Individualized Techniques (What works for you?)
- Saying “Yes” and Saying “No”
- Physical Contact – Get/Give a Hug to those you love!
- Control your devices

<https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/765974>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24316614/>

Relational Strategies

- **Interactions with Nature:** benefits include an enhanced use of our senses, a reported higher satisfaction with life, a more positive outlook on life, increased productivity at work, and an enhanced ability to cope with stress and recover from stress, illness, and injury.
- **Give Back:** Studies show volunteering has helped people manage a chronic illness, enrich a sense of purpose and lower stress levels. Can also offset isolation, allow for contextual understanding and reduce stress.
- **Work to Resolve Conflict:** Ongoing tension and conflict in relationships, whether at home, work, or otherwise, is one of the biggest causes of stress in people's lives. Reducing or resolving conflicts can lead to feeling as if a huge weight has been lifted off their shoulders.
- **Consider a Support Group:** Could be a therapeutic group or even a professional group that offers mentoring or support. A great way to combat isolation!

<http://www.ijpcm.org/index.php/IJPCM/article/view/154>

The-Nature-Principle-Reconnecting-Virtual/dp/161620141X

Leadership Strategies – Beyond Supervision

- Gratitude and Appreciation
- Reflection
- Boundaries
- Laughter and Joy in Work
- Modeling
- Actions vs. Words
- Reinforce Effort not Outcome

<https://www.healthleadersmedia.com/nursing/6-ways-nurse-leaders-can-manage-stress>

<https://voice.ons.org/news-and-views/leaders-need-to-walk-the-talk-when-it-comes-to-self-care-too>

Organizational Strategies – Policies and Procedures

- Leave policies, requests, and workload management
- EAP and other supports
- Incentives aren't always financial, but sometimes they should be
- Leadership, mentorship, and supervision
- Webinars and other programming
- Proper training that grows with your staff
- Block out no meeting/no Zoom times on your calendar

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Community Resiliency Model

How do we
reset our
nervous system
and pay
attention to our
bodies when
they talk to us?

The Skills of CRM The Basic Three

