

“The Silver Linings Approach to Covid: Growing Through the Experience of Social Isolation, Fear and Anxiety” on August 5 from 9:30-10:30am

Covid has created an upheaval in our world like none we have experienced before. Our sense of security has been shaken to its core and as caregivers, weariness is settling in, but it doesn't have to. Join Dr. Eric Berko as he shares insight into the lessons and practical ways to change our mindset, renew our passions and replace the fear with faith and the hysteria with hope.

LeadingAge Maryland

OUTLINE:

- a. HISTORY LESSON
- b. THE STRESS RESPONSE AND PTSD
- c. LEARN THE ABCs
- d. PRACTICE CBT
- e. 10 TAKE HOME TIPS

A History Lesson:

10 Pandemics

1. Antonine Plague (165 AD) – 5 million. Roman Empire (Pop = 190 million)
2. The Plague of Justinian (541-542) – 25 million. The Bubonic Plague. ½ of the population of Europe
3. The Black Death (1346-1353) – 75-200 million. The Bubonic plague
4. The Third Cholera Pandemic (1852-1860) – 1 million
5. The Flu Pandemic (1889-1890) – 1 million
6. The 6th Cholera Pandemic (1910-1911) – 800,000 lives (Beginning to learn social isolation)
7. The Flu Pandemic of 1918 – 20-50 million people worldwide
8. Asian Flu (1956-1958) – 2 million. Almost 70000 in the U.S.
9. The Flu Pandemic of 1968 -1 million people. Death rate about the same as the current pandemic
10. HIV / AIDS Pandemic (Peaked 2005-2012) – 36 million since 1981 [Pop = 7.8 billion]

In spite of these tragedies, the Industrial Revolution occurred, Shakespeare wrote all his works in a decade of repetitive plague outbreaks (during isolation), Revolutions were fought and won, social progress has occurred, the world wide economy has developed, the automobile was invented, the Internet was created, science has progressed with medical miracles and..... Reese's peanut butter cups were invented 😊

I am NOT trying to minimize this, but sometimes context helps!!

The Situation:

Logistic Concerns Related to the Virus • Childcare • Financial uncertainty • Caretaking • Isolation, quarantine • Shortages • Loss of routine, possibly avoidance strategies • Loss of normal coping/enjoyable activities

Emotional/Behavioral Concerns Related to the Virus • Feeling unsafe – health, society • What if I get sick? What if someone I love gets sick? • Anger • Loneliness • Uncertainty • Being home with family may raise intimacy/relationship issues • Boredom, loss of avoidance strategies • Grief • Increased substance use

The Stress Reaction:

IT IS NORMAL TO FEEL STRESSED, AFRAID and ALONE

FEAR IS A NORMAL REACTION TO UNCERTAINTY.

Fear **is flight vs. Flight**. It is here to help us. Survival instinct.

Engages reactivity in the response to stress in the [hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical](#) (HPA) pathway . Amygdala

STRESS VS. STRESSORS.

Chronic stress can lead to chronic fatigue.

When we feel afraid we tend to look for quick, easy answers to help us gain a sense of control and provide an endorphin rush.

Examples:

Job uncertainty: EAT

Financial uncertainty: EAT

Relationship Uncertainty: EAT

Health Uncertainty: EAT

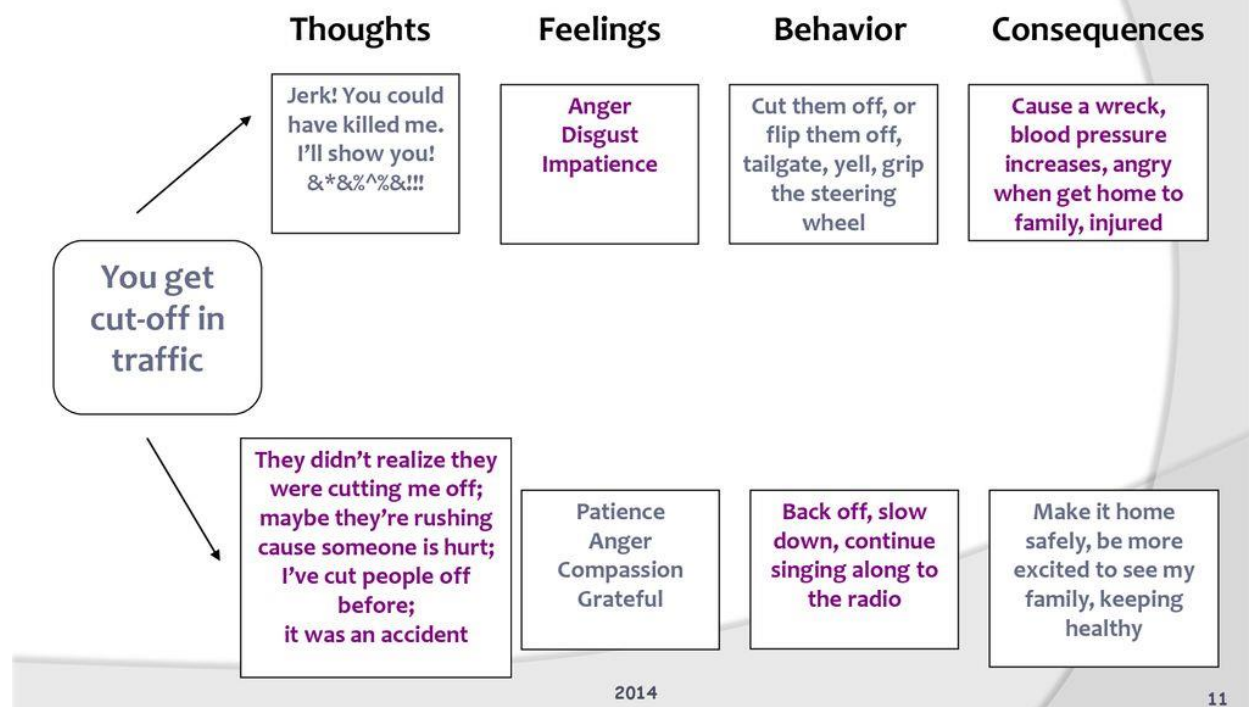
Pandemic Uncertainty: Get mad at everyone around them. Be judgy!

The Curvilinear Relationship Between Stress and Performance:

PTSD Symptoms:

Behavioral: agitation, irritability, hostility, hypervigilance, self-destructive behavior, or social isolation
 Psychological: flashback, fear, severe anxiety, or mistrust
 Mood: loss of interest or pleasure in activities, guilt, or loneliness
 Sleep: insomnia or nightmares
 Also common: emotional detachment or unwanted thoughts

ABC Model Pathways Example



Stuck Points – A 7 column worksheet example

CPT: Over-Accommodated Stuck Points Trust • "I can't trust anyone" • "Isolation helps my PTSD" Safety • "Mistakes are intolerable and cause serious harm or death" • "There's nothing I can do to protect myself." Power/Control • "I must be in control to be safe." Intimacy • "It's dangerous to be connected with other people." Esteem • "I deserve to be sick". If I am happy, I am not honoring the suffering of so many people.

Event: Pandemic hits and work as we know it is shut down

Emotion / Feeling: Fearful. Uncertain. Annoyed. Afraid (80/100)

Stuck Point Thoughts:

The hospital will never figure this out. (Magnifying)

We will all get laid off and the economy will be decimated (Generalizing & Catastrophizing)

Everyone is going to get infected (Black / White thinking)

We should never have ripped out our kitchen two weeks ago (Shoulds / What ifs)

I will never be able to go to the bathroom because people are stupid and buying all of the toilet paper. (Personalizing). Current version is Lysol.

Summary stuck point – Things will never get better

Evidence that supports the thought:

1. There is a great deal of uncertainty
2. The virus is highly contagious and spreads quickly and there is no cure or vaccine
3. I cannot control the virus or other people or the economy

Evidence that does NOT support the thought:

1. Pandemics throughout history have resolved
2. Scientists are working extremely hard to figure this out
3. My family is together and supporting each other
4. I have incredible confidence in the people I work with. We re-created the entire way we care for our patients in 2 weeks.

Alternate Thought: I can be patient and diligent and lean on the people I love and trust to minimize risk and support each other, no matter what.

“It’s understandable I am concerned about the current situation, AND I understand that worry is not an effective way to respond”

Emotion / Feeling / Rating: 25; Worried but comforted.

- Pay attention to the stuck point thinking and work to **balance** your thinking. Soften your view of yourself, of others and of the world around you.

Post Traumatic Growth:

After a hurricane...

Flood

Tornado

War

Sexual assault

Health crisis

Pandemic

It is not an immediate reaction. It takes time and patience with oneself. With work.....People develop new understandings of themselves, the world they live in, how to relate to other people, the kind of future they might have and a better understanding of how to live life.

The potentially transformative power of suffering is a foundational part of many philosophies and religions. The human condition includes fragility. That is what makes life so precious.

- Appreciation of life.
- Relationships with others.
- New possibilities in life.
- Personal strength
- Existential growth



TAKE HOME POINTS:

1. A mindset of **abundance rather than scarcity**. What do you have an abundance of? Love, compassion, kindness, grace, dignity, helpfulness.....
2. **How are you growing?** Facing challenges. Being creative. Focusing on what is important
3. **Your body holds trauma and anxiety**. Burn it off. Stay active. Get out of bed. Breathe fresh air.
4. **"The Simple Things"**. Everyone says it. This is actually the time to live it!!
5. Pay attention to **balanced thinking** and look out for stuck points.

6. **Who are you helping?** Being strong for others is a way to be strong for yourself. Many parents keep themselves together for their children. We grow from learning our own resilience and strength!
7. **Get facts from reliable sources.** Minimize news watching and social media posts which tend to do all of the limited thinking patterns (Maybe make a game of how many of the stuck point thinking patterns you can find if you really need to look at social media)
8. **It is OK to feel afraid and uncertain.** That is a normal human emotion. In fact it the most raw and basic reaction we have. Embrace it. Do not be afraid of it. Listen to it. Grow from it. Grow through it.
9. In the end we all have a choice. **We choose our focus.** We choose how we use our energy. We choose how we use our time. Choose wisely. And choose to be the hero of your story. Trust your wisdom. Be patient and supportive and kind to yourself and others, and the uncertainty will become manageable.
10. **Don't be alone.** Connect with others. Social support is ALWAYS the number one indicator of mental health!

“Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all.”
– **Emily Dickinson**