



## **PHASE II OF THE NEW NORMAL**

### **Dealing with the Psychological Aspects of Being Quarantined because of the Coronavirus (COVID 19)**

Dealing with a public health emergency at a general level was covered in our previous handout, which was considered as Phase I in the New Normal. This document will discuss the specific issues generated by the new event of being quarantined or having to shelter in place. If you are required to be in quarantine, realize it may be up to a minimum of 14 days. Quarantine can be stressful and lead to a variety of psychological and physiological symptoms, including: Fear about your health and safety, including stress or hyper-vigilance about checking yourself for potential symptoms. Other emotions may be sadness, anger, or anxiety related to separation from family and friends, boredom or fatigue at lack of stimuli and guilt about being unable to work or support others, especially children or family. If you are quarantined in limited space, you may begin to feel claustrophobic. As was discussed in the first document the focus will be on the emotional-physical and psychological results caused by the change as well as providing coping and countermeasures necessary for navigating Phase II. There are many names for Phase II that include:

- Quarantine
- Enforceable Quarantine
- Shelter in Place
- Staying at Home
- Remote Working

Irrespective of the names, the impact will create Social and Psychological disruption for you and your family. Social Disruption means that you may no longer be connected to many individuals in the outside world such as elderly parents, other family members who may be at risk for getting the COVID 19 virus, friends, co-workers, and recreational outlets or exercise facilities. This Social Disruption then can contribute to Psychological Disruption. Psychological Disruption can affect three major components related to our wellbeing. Those components are:

- **Control**
  - **Identity**
  - **Self-Esteem**
- **CONTROL** relates to our ability to come and go to work, home shopping centers, restaurants, airline travel, and many more activities. We become forced to remain in a limited environment and are then restricted to what we can and cannot do. This limitation can lead to frustration and a sense of helplessness. The helplessness can relate to both our job as well as our personal life. Your work tasks may either change or be difficult or impossible to complete. Important home projects may have to be put on hold or even abandoned. This perception of helplessness may then begin to affect



## ***Nicoletti-Flater Associates, PLLP***

3595 S. Teller St. Suite 310 | Lakewood, CO. 80235

Ph: 303-989-1617 | Fax: 303-985-3133 | [www.traumathreatandpublicsafetypsychology.com](http://www.traumathreatandpublicsafetypsychology.com)

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your motivation to even engage in areas of responsibility to which you do have control.

- **Intervention Options**

- Focus on your locus of control. Take control of the areas in which you do have control
  - Develop and follow work and personal routines. Personal routines can involve activities, workouts, family interactions or recreational endeavors. Don't let yourself get to the point that you are not sure what day of the week it is.
  - Be mindful of your personal hygiene. In other words, don't just dress up every day in your workout sweats and a hoodie. Try to follow the same or similar hygiene routine that you normally would.
  - Stay in contact with your support systems, your family members and your points of contact to the outside world during a quarantine.
  - Take advantage of activities or locations that you can utilize such as outdoor walks.
  - Develop contingency plans in the event you do acquire the virus. These contingency plans could involve taking care of children or family member, taking care of your pets, or taking care of personal or household responsibilities.
  - Try to keep the same wake up schedule that you had when you were not quarantined.
  - Try to maintain a positive lens. Use this time to focus on projects, work, or goals in the home you have put off due to "not having the time." At the same time, it is "ok" to not be productive during all of the time.
  - Stress and trauma reactions tend to be more severe when you feel personally out of control or helpless to assist yourself or your family. Make stress management a daily priority. If your mind drifts to Worst-Case scenarios try to see if you can develop a plan for those scenarios, but do not dwell on them.
  - Understand that your role during this public health emergency may be different than anything you have done before, and this may cause additional stress. Acknowledge that this is normal.
  - Separation from family and friends will likely exacerbate your worries. If possible, periodically check-in with at least one member of your family. Note that communication abilities may decrease or even be impossible, so if your family is unreachable, do not allow your mind to go to worst-case scenarios.
- **IDENTITY** relates to the label(s) other people give us or we give ourselves. Career related examples would be 'I am a police officer, firefighter, teacher, physician,



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manager, etc'. Personal examples would be 'I am a mom/dad, coach, marathon runner, etc'. Being under quarantine can shatter one, some, or all our identities. If you only have one Identity and that becomes shattered, you will experience an emotional crisis. Resilient individuals tend to have multiple Identities.

- **Intervention Options**

- Understand that your role during the quarantine may be different than anything you have done before, and this may cause additional stress. Acknowledge that this is normal
- Develop new Identities, even if they are only temporary.
- Watch or watch again a movie starring Bill Murray entitled 'Groundhog Day'. The movie is about an individual, played by Bill Murray, who is stuck in the same day, which is Groundhog Day. He starts out by not accepting his current state of existence, which leads to a lot of misery. Once he embraces his dilemma, he is able to function without undue negative emotions until Groundhog Day ended. The important message in the movie is that there is nothing to be gained by fighting your circumstances; you must try to make the best out of an unpleasant situation.
- It is of key importance to develop a good coping strategy for you and your family.
- Respond to the quarantine as if you are a survivor not a victim. This means that you need to utilize all your coping resources. You wouldn't judge yourself for needing a doctor's assistance resetting a broken bone so don't judge yourself if you need assistance reinventing yourself and developing new identities. Utilize whatever resources you have available to you including family, friends, spiritual advisors, or mental health professionals.

- **SELF ESTEEM** relates to how you think about and feel about yourself. It is basically the statements and self-talk that goes on inside our head. This is the hardest issue you will face. How do you balance feeling good about yourself when you are having a difficult time adjusting to your new role and duties or they don't seem as important as your 'real job'. You may find yourself simultaneously being outside your comfort zone while at the same time watching your comfort zone shrinking. A 'Comfort Zone is basically this invisible entity that surrounds us. Everything inside our Comfort Zone we don't mind doing, while everything outside our Comfort Zone we avoid or experience anxiety if we are outside of the zone. Being thrown into Remote Working for some will be foreign and outside of their Comfort Zone. Simultaneously, you could have your Comfort Zone shrinking because you are quarantined and doing the same things over and over. Either way your self-concept will be negatively affected.

- **Intervention Options**



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- Make it a task to daily push against the boundaries of your Comfort Zone by doing something that is outside of it. Just make sure that you are doing small steps. If you make too big of a leap it could cause anxiety, which would cause you to move back into your old Comfort Zone.
  - Keep a log of your actions and behaviors that occur on the edge or outside of the Comfort Zone. These actions could involve physical development, psychological development, brain development or relationship development.
  - Problem-solve ways to meet work demands while at the same time meeting family or personal demands.
  - Generate a timeline for Comfort Zone expansion. Then at the end of the timeline re-evaluate your accomplishments.
  - Take advantage of your Agency's psychological services
  - Re-evaluate how you are doing. This involves being honest with yourself and asking others about how they think you are doing.
  - Most importantly, don't be afraid to congratulate yourself for your accomplishments.
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- **A Real Time Assessment of psychological adjustment for First Responders**-Due to the prolong nature of COVID 19 at this point in time you may be experiencing a variety of symptoms which are causing you both social and psychological disruption in you and your family's life. The most common symptom you may be experiencing is Circuit Overload which will be due to the trauma contamination factor of **TOO MUCH, TOO MANY AND TOO LONG**. Your Surface Energy has probably been drained for a while and you are now trying to function on Core Energy. Surface Energy can be replaced by sleep and resting. Core Energy, however, takes much longer to revive. You may also be noticing more family pressures as your duties may be taking you away from your family and responsibilities. You also may have the perception, either implied by your agency, or self-imposed that 'You don't have time to bleed'. Which means that you either don't have the time to decompress or don't feel you should take the time to decompress. Even if you do take the time to relax or decompress it may not be helpful because you may either be feeling guilty or adding 'I should be...' statements in your head.
    - **Intervention Options**
      - Accept that you have just entered the realm of the 'New Normal'.
      - You must give yourself permission to relax and decompress without inviting guilt and 'I should' statements.
      - Take small breaks.
      - Separate emotions into categories such as fear of Covid 19, working too many hours, feeling pressure from your family, or feeling bad for not engaging in self-care.
      - Don't be afraid to seek help



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- Remember survival of the fittest does not go to the strongest, fastest or smartest, but to the person who adapts the quickest

**During this time, it is important to focus on adaptation and resiliency rather than panic. If you or any members of your family are struggling, take advantage of any available resources either in person or electronically such as tele-therapy being offered by your Department's Psychological Services or Employee Assistance Program.**

### **Additional Resources**

[https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/IACP\\_Covid-19\\_Factsheet\\_How%20to%20Stay%20Healthy.pdf?utm\\_source=Informz&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Informz%20Email](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/IACP_Covid-19_Factsheet_How%20to%20Stay%20Healthy.pdf?utm_source=Informz&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Informz%20Email)

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Family Emergency Plan Wallet Cards:

[https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1440517182204-fd5e99bd2931f0f566d068ca844370ce/Family\\_Emergency\\_plan\\_wallet\\_2015.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1440517182204-fd5e99bd2931f0f566d068ca844370ce/Family_Emergency_plan_wallet_2015.pdf)

Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event- A Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers:

<https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA12-4732/SMA12-4732.pdf>

Managing Intense Emotions During Disaster Response:

<https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//NMH05-0210/NMH05-0210.pdf>

Returning to Work After Disaster Response:

<https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA14-4870/SMA14-4870.pdf>

**THE PHASE III DOCUMENT IN THIS SERIES IS NOW AVAILABLE AND IS DEALING WITH THE LOSS OF ONE OF YOUR OWN FROM THE COVID 19, THE PHASE IV DOCUMENT, WHICH WILL BE DEALING WITH RECOVERY FROM THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC WILL NOT BE RELEASED UNTIL THE CURVE HAS BEEN FLATTENED AND AN END IS IN SITE**