

Keeping A Strong Mindset During Difficult Times

By Katie Cheadle, Published in Peninsula Magazine

2020 will undoubtedly go down as a year we will all remember. It's pushed us in many ways, challenging us to slow down and reminding us that control is an illusion. As families have been impacted in a number of ways, cancelling vacations, working from home, managing child care and working their full time job, there continues to be mounting health concerns, fears around the economy, and the list goes on. It's been more important than ever that we find ways to feel grounded, resilient, and strong, as many of us have been mentally and emotionally tested. The political landscape is turbulent, the health and wellness of our families is at risk, life as we know it has completely been turned upside down.

As a therapist working remotely and seeing clients in person, I hear the countless ways that this is impacting individual's mental health. Grief, anxiety, stress, irritability, the list goes on. We are feeling the impact of Covid. In this article I share 5 ways that can support you in keeping a strong, resilient mindset in difficult times.

1. Manage Expectations. Set small, achievable goals for your day and your weeks. With so much uncertainty and access being limited, it's easy to feel let down when things don't go your way. Without assuming the worst or expecting something bad to happen, it's a powerful practice to prepare for there to be change or problems that arise during these times. It's in our nature to resist what's happening and cling to the way we want them to be, but minimizing your expectations can be a supportive practice when it comes to maintaining our mental health. It's easy to get drawn into over committing and under delivering, when we feel that there is a surplus of time available to us. You will feel best when you keep it simple.

2. Develop a Routine. Routine is our friend in times like this. When the news is changing daily, our day to day life can start to feel a bit out of control. Creating some sort of routine to help you feel grounded and give you a sense of stability and predictability can help feelings of anxiety. It can be soothing to have your morning coffee in your favorite part of the home, write in your gratitude journal, go on an evening walk, or perhaps incorporate some stretching each night before bed. Any structure or routine that you can incorporate in your day will go a long way in supporting your mental and physical health.

3. Be Kind to Yourself. It's easy to get frustrated and critical in regards to how you're spending your time, or your lack of inspiration, or maybe you're just sick and tired of being sick and tired. We can also fall prey to the comparison game when our neighbors have picked up baking and started a podcast or your social media friends created a new business and are learning a second language. This is when practicing mindfulness is so important so that we can bring gentle awareness to our thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Our inner critic can be brutal in challenging times, but if we're aware of that voice in our head we can shift our thoughts to something more positive and up-lifting.

4. Stay Connected. - Its easy to isolate, especially when social distancing is being encouraged and most of the spaces we're accustomed to connecting with others is closed and considered off limits during this time. Its so important to find connections where you can. Maybe this means scheduling a family Zoom Session, face timing a friend once a week, or going on a walk with a friend. When we dwell in isolation, it's easy to feel disconnected and experience a greater sense of sadness. Get creative when it comes to activities and finding ways to engage with others. We need each other!

5. Stay Present. It's so easy to get caught up in all the "what ifs" regarding the future, or dwell in anger or regret about the way things have played out thus far. This is a thought process that leads us to feeling distressed and uneasy. When we can notice our thoughts in real time and remain present, we're able to embrace life one moment at a time. Often our mind wants to be anywhere, but here. When you notice your thoughts drifting away, bring them back to the present moment. This is a powerful mindset shift that cultivates a greater sense of joy, connection, and gratitude.

During this time, and any difficult time, it is so important to have a healthy mindset. When facing challenges, our attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs play a huge role in the way that we're able to relate to the experience and the resilience we can tap into. Now it's more important than ever that we prioritize our mental health and take care of ourselves. I hope these tips are useful and practical as we approach the Fall season.

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