

Self-Care through a Resilience Lens

Self-care and resilience are essential as we adapt to a new reality that is shifting daily. They are very popular topics in the world of human services, but what does that look like right now when the new normal is a place filled with uncertainty and anxiety for many of us? This guide is intended to provide a starting point as we struggle to adapt to the many changes we are experiencing now and those we expect to experience in the time to come.

Change is loss. The paradigm shift from a traditional work model to telework brings significant change and potentially disruption to our daily lives. It's understandable that we might feel conflicted, ambivalent, anxious and relieved in the course of a single hour.

For those of us suddenly at home, learning to balance the work/family dynamic is a significant change. Being away from co-workers, in small spaces with family members or living alone with social distancing can add to feelings of isolation.

Our co-workers identified as essential are also experiencing a considerable shift. With heavier than normal workloads, staff reductions, and personal health risks, they may experience a heightened sense of anxiety. Those still on the frontlines may also be experiencing a sense of isolation as changes in schedules, staffing, and social distancing practices result in less contact with others.

Some of us may see the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as troublesome, but for many these impacts are actually traumatic. Before we can even begin to look at coping with our experience, it is important to work towards regaining equilibrium.



Find links to resources on the COVID-19 OWL
<https://dhsoha.sharepoint.com/teams/Hub-DHSOHA-COVID19>





The brain on trauma. Trouble concentrating or maintaining focus, prioritizing tasks, feeling irritable, short term memory difficulty, a sense of social disengagement, do any of these issues sound familiar right now?

When the brain is in a reactive state, these higher functions tend to be significantly reduced or even go offline altogether.

Dr. Daniel Siegel offers a brief overview of the ways in which trauma affects the brain using his well-known hand model. This video is targeted towards parents and children, but the model applies to all.

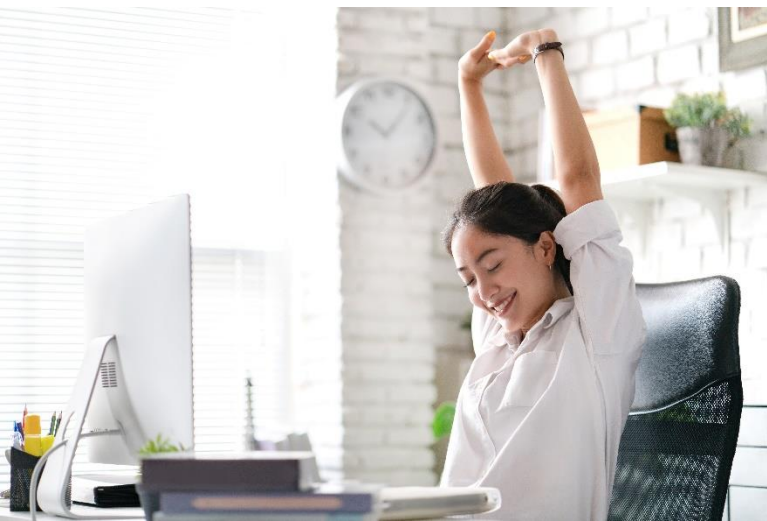


Practical ways to take back your brain. Once we recognize what is happening, there are steps we can take to regulate the brain and nervous system.

- **Access the senses:** The senses provide a very simple avenue to calm and regulate the nervous system. The 5,4,3,2,1 technique  is a very simple practice to bring you into your body in the present moment. Utilizing sensory tools such as fidget spinners, noise reducing headphones, and soft items such as stress balls or fleece fabric can also be helpful.
- **Move the body:** Physical activity can mitigate the effects of trauma and has demonstrated benefits for brain health . Moving your body isn't about a "workout" but rather stimulating circulation and the breath. People with mobility issues can engage in adaptive movement. There are many accessible videos available online to offer short movement breaks. You can explore online for stress relief exercise, seated exercise, yoga, tai chi, qi gong, and any number of other search terms related to movement.
- **Breathe:** Intentional breathwork  has been demonstrated to increase oxygenation, reduce blood pressure, manage pain and provide a host of other benefits. You can readily find options online by searching with keywords breathing exercises .
- **Leverage technology:** While the onslaught of information coming at us from technology can feel crushing, technology can also be an ally when one feels overwhelmed. Online tools such as *Insight Timer* can assist you with meditation and other contemplative practices. Visit your app store to learn about this and other wellness resources.

- **Hydrate:** A decrease in hydration by as little as 2% has been demonstrated to negatively impact cognition and mood. Increase your water intake! 📍

My brain is back online, now what? Now that you have regained some of those executive functions, how do you begin to process the changes happening in this strange and stressful time? This brings us back to the beginning: loss is an inherent part of change and grief is the response to loss. We usually associate grief with death, but grief can come with any loss, not just loss related to death. Grief is usually perceived as an emotional response, yet grief is expressed in many ways including physical, cognitive, behavioral, and social disruption. Sound familiar? Hint: See the beginning of this guide.



- **Acknowledge that there have been losses.** With the changes in our work world, life as we know it has been disrupted. Routines, the comfort of the familiar, social and economic stability are all in a period of transition and chaos. It's normal to experience reactions to these losses 📍.

- **Explore what works for you.** Most of us have cultivated a set of coping skills over the course of our lives. We know that

coping skills 📍 vary based on lived experience, they may be healthy or unhealthy, but they're ours. Taking a little bit of time to be thoughtful about how we want to address losses and reactions to those losses can go a long way to ease the path to recovery and healing. Recognize that the coping mechanisms that worked today might be different than what worked yesterday or what will work next week.

- **Sphere of Influence v. Sphere of Control** 📍 We have only moderate influence over our circumstances and even less control over outcomes. However, our power lies in determining *our response* to circumstances and outcomes. Focusing on areas of immediate control, such as how we set up our work spaces or how we structure our tasks while letting go of what we can't 📍, gives us a stronger sense of personal control in our life and work.

📍 Click on the link icons to visit the many resources embedded in this guide.