

Life Moving Forward

Many of us have experienced trauma through the pandemic. We have become accustomed to a certain way of life over the last year and half and have created habits, worries and fears throughout. Now that we are seeing some light at the end and things are changing, how do we move forward and find a balance again?

- Renew social connections. Re-establish relationships. We have spent a lot of time apart from those that we love and have had to get creative with ways of connecting while at a distance. It's important to re-establish the relationships as loss of human connection has been a large issue throughout.
- As employers and employees, it is important to respect each other's potential impact of trauma and discuss with each other our needs and comfort levels. Employers may take the time to talk with their employees about what their needs are with return to work and within the work setting. Employees may be open about those needs. Employers may remind employees of supports that are available if needed.
- Remember to support each other. As friends, family and coworkers, we should take the time to talk to each other and do more listening. Be there for each other and provide supports if needed.
- With trauma, we may feel the need to avoid certain places, people, things to avoid fears and discomfort. We may feel sleep disturbances, concentration problems, irritability, being hyper vigilant or hiding from our lives. It is important to learn how to calm the body and mind. This includes breathing exercises, muscle relaxation, sleep hygiene, mindfulness practice and reaching out for help when needed.
- A reminder that it is normal to feel frustrated with how you react to situations now or the feeling that you are not yourself and miss life before the pandemic. Always work towards self-compassion and giving yourself grace. Everyone handles situations differently and has a different comfort level and we need to give ourselves time and patience. Connect with people and things that you enjoy.
- In the anxiety cycle, oftentimes, we feel our anxiety coming and we will avoid or escape the situation and while this may give us a brief period of relief, avoidance increases our anxiety. Exposure builds tolerance over time. Slowly reintroduce yourself to situations that bring you fear and anxiety. Take baby steps, also called graded exposure. Pick a situation that brings you anxiety and work up to tackling it.
- Prioritize your mental health. Take inventory of areas of your life such as sleep, nutrition, exercise, self-care, substance intake, etc. Make sure you are "filling up your cup" in all areas and noticing the areas that may have room for improvements. Don't forget to notice what is going well for you already!
- Practice gratitude. We have spent a lot of time focused on how the pandemic has impacted our lives negatively. Let's not forget to remind ourselves of the things that are positive in our lives and what we still have. Health, family, friends, livelihood, resilience, etc.
- Be resilient. How can we adapt to make these situations fit into our lives? There are some things that we cannot change but we can try to make the best of it.
- Continue to unplug and give yourself permission to step back and breathe. It is not an easy time and trauma and moving forward will be different for all. Find what works for you.

