

10x Steps in crisis

1. Mental Pandemia

- In the pandemic context we speak about isolation, PPE (Personal Protecting Equipment) and social distance. We isolated from one another, we felt safe more or less in front of our computer screens. We focused mainly on the absence of disease (the coronavirus infection) and lost the aspect of well-being, mental and social as well, according to WHO definition of health.



2. How we feel?

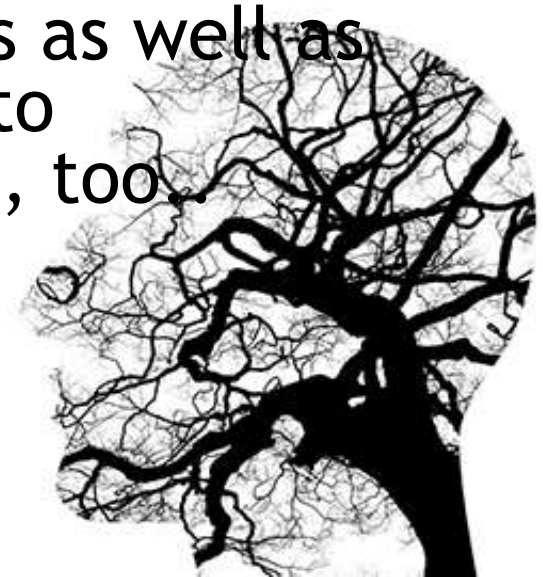


- It looks we are all right, we smile on PC screens. Behind our masks (physical or psychological) many of us feel angry, tired, frightened, even overwhelmed. We yell to each other, to children and family, and then we get infected with guilt...
- We have to choose our health vs the others', our professional future and development in the context of continuous frustration and judgemental environment
- You're headmaster, ~~you're strong!~~ You're you!



3. Choose and react

- We live a global event, but we live it and feel it at personal level, according to personal history and issues generated by actual crisis.
- When we face acute crisis, when our safety and of those close to us is jeopardized, our priorities change , as well as our vision on what is or is not important - and this is right to happen.
- Should we get that we can understand our reactions as well as the others' and go from judgemental and criticism to compassion and empathy towards the others and us, too.



4. FFF, strategy or physiological response?

- When subjected to stress or threatening situations, our nervous system reacts swiftly and automatically for survival. Through a well-known mechanism, we activate the Fight or Flight response. Another component of this is Freeze - we get paralyzed in face of danger.
- **We Fight** - we organize, we gather, we solve, and sometimes fight with others...
- **We Flee** - I cannot, There's no point, I am tired, but not because we are cowards ...
- **We Freeze** - we are overwhelmed and we self-soothe our pain, but not because we don't care ...

Understanding the
3 stress responses



Fight



Flight



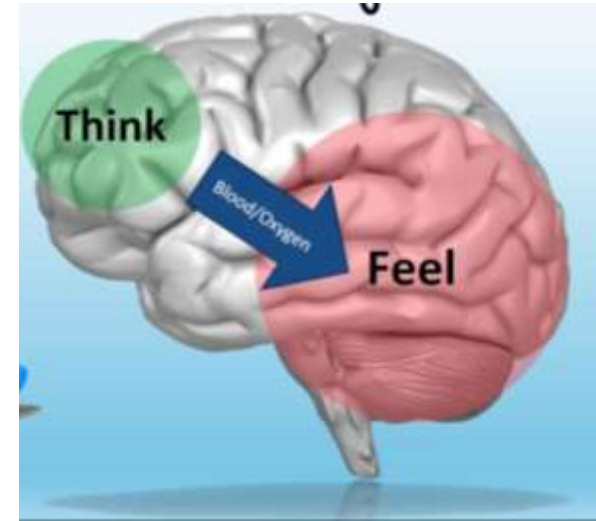
Freeze

We can adopt any of the above or a combination of two and even all three. It is important to understand that this might not be our strategy but the mere response to a threatening situation, the fight with an invisible enemy.



5. How to shift from reaction to action?

- It is difficult to "calm down" in crisis. Our cortical structures, responsible for analysis and decision are hijacked by the limbic system (emotional brain) and amygdala (analysing strong emotions such as anger and fear).
- Sometimes, the simply recognition of a "reaction", instead of the action itself, it is enough to wake us up and make us regain reason and strength unaltered and get us able to take the right decisions in what we do.
- Otherwise we can use psychological techniques for emotional and mental hygiene in order to restore balance



6. Grounding



- When we start imagining fatalistic situations, we will react to those thoughts as if the scenarios were happening now. Our mind makes no difference between imagination and reality.
- Anxiety comes when we want to control what's out of our control (authorities reaction, people attitude, end of pandemic, what if).
- Grounding techniques will distract us from the negative thoughts and emotions spiral, will stop intruding memories and bring attention to the present.



7. Grounding exercise 1

- Sit against the wall or on a chair. Feel your steadiness, feel you are supported, feel covered. We cannot feel emotionally safe if we are not physically safe.



8. Grounding exercise 2

- Connect with your environment using your five senses (The Helpful Hand):
- 5 things I can see around;
- 4 things I can feel around;
- 3 things I can hear around;
- 2 things I can smell around;
- 1 thing I can taste around ...



9. And don't forget to breathe...



- Could I ever forget to breathe?
- Yes, you can... forget to breathe profoundly. One of the major effects of stress is short breath (and it is common to get nervous or anxious). This tightens the respiratory muscles and thus makes breathe further difficult.
- Breathe deeply, keeping a hand on your thorax and one on your abdomen. Try not to move your chest...



10. Other resources...

- Music
- Dance
- Movement
- Nature
- Art
- Spiritual



References

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