



Ruby Jo Walker, LCSW



Hello to you,

I have hesitated to write about resiliency during this pandemic, as it is such a unique time—not one we have experienced in our history. I felt hesitant about being "tone deaf" in such a sensitive and heart-heavy time with offering resiliency practices—with so many losses that are occurring. Dr. Bessel Van der Kolk, the grandfather of neurobiology and trauma, recently posted a video that directly addressed the impact of the pandemic—and how it creates the preconditions of trauma. He also posted about what we can do to support ourselves during this time, which I've included below:

The preconditions of trauma are:

—**Lack of predictability:** To support predictability, create schedules. This includes making a schedule for meals, exercise, time with family and friends, working with school schedules for parents, meditation, etc. Find what you can look forward to and include a calendar for connection.

—**Immobility:** Because the nervous system does not do well with immobility, it is important to move in some ways daily. Exercise is a great thing to do at this time. This supports the body utilizing the stress hormones created to move and supports health and more ease. If you can be in nature, that is even better. Yoga, Tai Chi and Qi Gong as well as aerobic activity are all very supportive to the nervous system.

—**Loss of connection:** Our interactions with each other regulate us—as we are tribal creatures. And our brains get in synch and calm our nervous system. Connection is supported by face to face connection—even if it is through Zoom or FaceTime. When we are sad and scared, we are meant to be connected. This is an important time to connect. Family meals, games, story-telling and music are all great supports at this time.

—**Loss of sense of time and sequences:** Mindfulness helps us tolerate more—we develop the muscle to strengthen our ability to deal with the uncomfortable—and then, we go back to just feeling our breath. This creates more regulation in the nervous system. We learn everything does actually change.

—**Loss of safety:** Recognizing that we do not feel safe at times is helpful. And if you are quarantined with others, safe touch can support the sense of safety. Privacy also supports this.

—**Loss of sense of purpose:** Feel the purpose in the actions you are involved with—like cutting the vegetables for the meal while cooking or any chores, by recognizing that they are supporting ourselves and others. Let social connection have purpose of support—whether it is taking care of children, friends or partners—even at a distance.

I found these ideas helpful to consider. I got reminded by a client that we all need to be reminded of some basic resiliency practices—because we can forget them when we get more activated. So, I wanted to remind you of some of the resiliency practices that support shifting the nervous system from a trauma state to a more resilient state:

—**Orientation:** Allowing ourselves to make contact with the environment through our senses: looking around and taking in what is pleasant, feeling the warmth of a cup filled with warm tea, listening to the sounds around us, etc.

—**Taking in the good:** Letting ourselves notice what is right and okay in the moment. We might not be able to leave the house, but we might be able to take in the comfort of a friend reaching out, or a tasty meal. Savoring helps us—it actually shifts the nervous system.

—**Self-compassion:** Holding our inherent goodness and offering ourselves the kindness we often give others.

—**Gratitude:** Being grateful for what we do have, even if there are losses.

Take care,

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