

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE AGE OF COVID

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DISASTER PSYCHIATRY

- Depression, anxiety disorders and substance-related disorders tend to follow major catastrophes.
- 10 - 33% of people present symptoms of acute stress within a month of a disaster.
 - 4 - 6% develop PTSD.
- Most common symptoms:
 - Sleeplessness
 - Anxiety
 - Sadness
 - Overwhelming bereavement

COVID AND MENTAL HEALTH

“Second wave” will be a separate pandemic, for which we are not prepared.

- Not enough mental health providers.
- Not enough psychiatric beds.
- Low socio-economic groups, Latino and African American communities will be affected disproportionately.
- Increase in deaths by suicide and overdose.

COVID AND MENTAL HEALTH

- Highest risk for suicide occurs approximately 6 months following a major event.
 - October – December, 2020.
- Suicide rates are highly influenced by unemployment rates.
 - For every 1% increase in unemployment rate, there is a 1.6% increase in suicide rate.
 - ~ 1,283 people die from suicide in WA state annually.
 - If unemployment increases by 5%, approximately 103 additional people would die by suicide. If it increases by 20%, 412 additional people would die by suicide.



COVID
AND
MENTAL
HEALTH

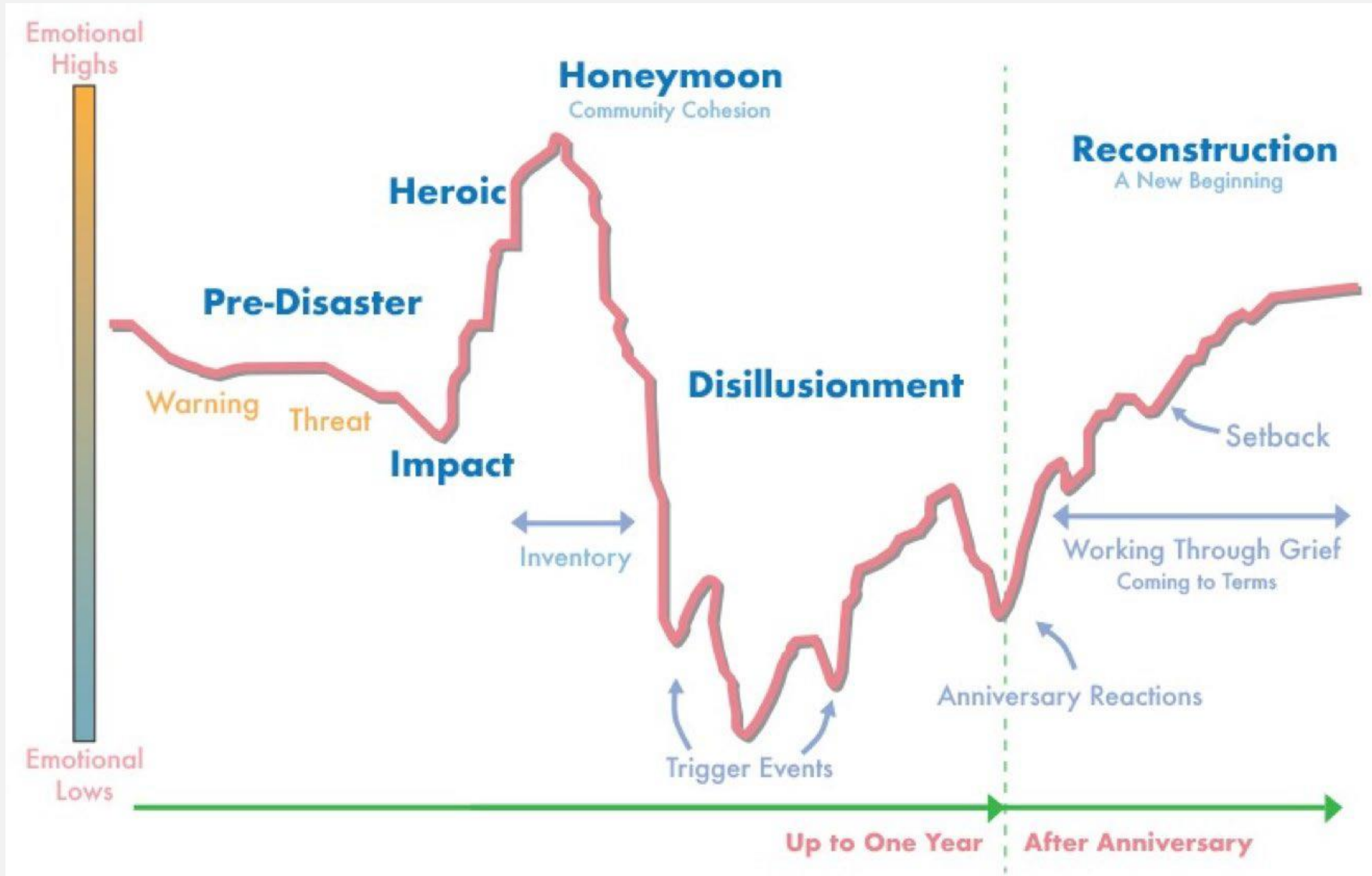
About half of the people who develop a mental health problem will develop a substance-use disorder as well, and vice versa.



COVID
AND
MENTAL
HEALTH

As providers, we should be focusing on:

- Community support to increase social connections.
- Help developing coping skills to deal with the stressors.
- Emphasis in education regarding what to expect during disaster-related psychiatric symptoms.



Resiliency:

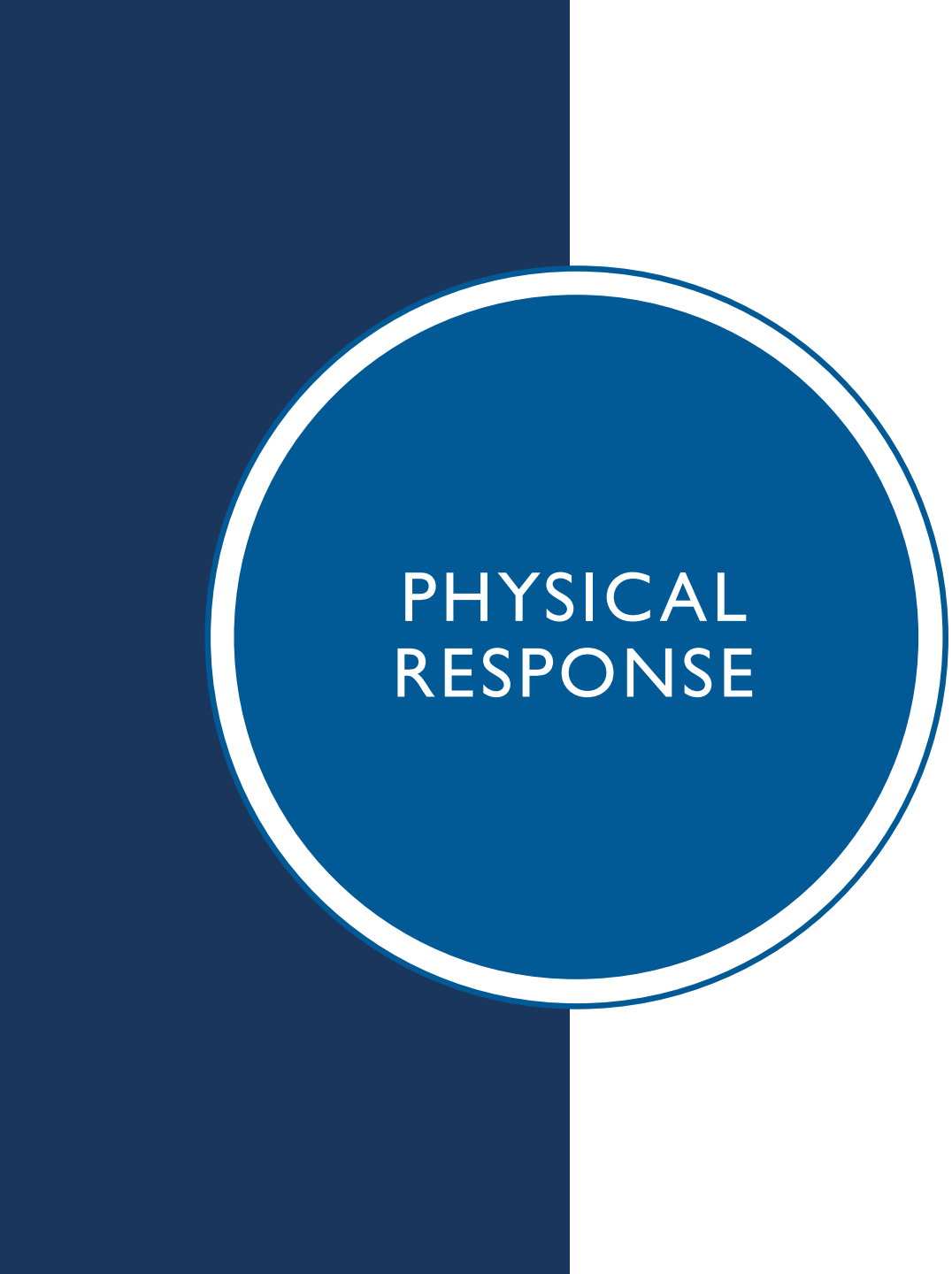
- Focusing on developing social connections.
- Development of a sense of purpose.
- Psychological flexibility.
- Focusing on hope.



COVID
AND
MENTAL
HEALTH

CONCERNS

- Illness (contracted or fear of contracting).
- Isolation from family, friends, colleagues, co-workers, etc.
- Prolonged grief.
- Unemployment.
- Financial stressors.
- Interrupted schooling.
- Lack of routines.
- Lack of exercise.



PHYSICAL RESPONSE

- Shortness of breath
- Sweating
- Dizziness
- Elevated blood pressure
- Fainting
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Tremors
- Nausea
- Pain

MENTAL RESPONSE



Confusion



Hypervigilance



Intrusive images



Nightmares



Memory problems



Poor concentration



EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

- Agitation
- Anxiety
- Denial
- Depression
- Emotional shock
- Fear
- Grief
- Guilt
- Overwhelmed
- Irritability



BEHAVIORAL RESPONSE

- Increased alcohol use
- Change in patterns (activity, speech)
- Change in sexual function
- Communication changes
- Emotional outbursts
- Appetite changes
- Social withdrawal

SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR FAMILIES

Flexible, but consistent daily schedule

Creative ways to stay connected with family (video, board games, etc.)

Utilizing kind, supportive words

Predictable and consistent check-ins with children and teens

Spend individual time with each child

Socially distanced interactions

SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

Try

Try to eat regular, nourishing meals.

Maintain

Maintain a regular sleep schedule to the best of your ability. When possible, have the same wake up and bedtime each day. Avoid screens for an hour prior to sleep.

Exercise

Exercise when you are able.

Find

If possible, find a creative outlet to engage in during downtime.

Engage

Engage with spiritual practices that you enjoy and find helpful.

Stay in

Stay in touch with supportive friends and family members.

Develop

Develop a daily, ten-minute family check-in where each member can share suggestions for making things better. End the check-in with what is currently going well.

Set aside

If in a relationship, set aside a few minutes daily to check in with your partner.

SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR INFANTS, TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS

- Provide regular, nourishing meals.
- When possible, have the same wake up and bedtime each day. Avoid screens for an hour prior to sleep.
- Provide reassurance through physical closeness and comforting movements, such as rocking or swaying while holding.
- If possible, find a creative outlet to engage in, such as baking, “painting” the house with a paintbrush and bucket of water, and sensory play with a bin of rice.
- Provide verbal reassurance (for children who understand language).
- If possible, video chat with friends and family.

SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

Provide	Provide regular, nourishing meals.
Maintain	Maintain a regular sleep schedule to the best of your ability. When possible, have the same wake up and bedtime each day. Avoid screens for an hour prior to sleep.
Provide	Provide opportunities for exercise. Spend time outside when possible.
Find	If possible, find a creative outlet to engage in, such as writing and illustrating a book about pandemic experiences from a kid's perspective, drawing sidewalk chalk messages for neighbors, cooking and baking.
Provide	Provide verbal reassurance. Avoid unnecessary exposure to adult conversations and stressors.
Engage	Engage children in spiritual practices you've found helpful for children.
Set	Set gentle but firm limits.
Video	If possible, video chat with friends and family.

SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR ADOLESCENTS



QUESTIONS?