

Unlock Your Self During Lockdown: Cut of your Negativity and Unleash your Positivity

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Abstract:

When we perceive a situation negatively, the outcome will be negative and if we perceive it positively, it gives us positive implications. We are forced to live our life under certain restrictions, we are not any more in the charge of controlling our movement, our life is full of instructions, our freedom got restricted or limited. The most common problems reported during this Lockdown are difficulty in managing daily stress and anxiety, frustration, a fear of unknown and uncertainty, coping up with this forced isolation and loneliness, trouble sleeping, eating problem. Some of the recent supporting news update regarding the effect of Covid-19 Pandemic outbreak on our daily life that came into consideration are domestic violence, incidents of abuse and violence faced by children. Children are more vulnerable to abuse and violence during coronavirus lockdowns, says UN expert. This research article mainly focuses on the major psychological approaches like Psychoanalytic Approach, Cognitive Approach, Humanistic Approach to explain the cause behind the ongoing issues emerged due to this sudden COVID-19 pandemic and also emphasises some positive management skills for maintaining a healthy mental health for both adults and children and unlock their self during this time of lockdown.

Keyword: COVID-19, Lockdown times, Mental health, Psychological Approaches, PERMA model, Stress, Stress Management

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"Being Happy Doesn't Mean That Everything Is Perfect, It Means You Have Decided to Look Beyond the Imperfection"

-Gerard Way (1977-present)

A holiday is an opportunity to journey within. It also a chance to rediscover our self. We all love holidays. "Need a break". Or "Need to spend some time with our nearest and dearest one", this thought came to our mind every day before this outbreak. We were in a desperate need of a family vacation or wanted a break from our daily routine activities. But suddenly the situation has been changed. We are forced to live our life under certain restrictions. We are not any more in the charge of controlling our movement, our life is full of instructions, our freedom got restricted or limited. "Many of my patients are very anxious about what the implications are for their personal health and their safety, I think this is on everybody's mind right now" says Dwain C. Fehon, PsyD (March, 2020), chief psychologist of Yale New Haven Hospital's psychiatric services. The most common problems reported during this Lockdown are difficulty in managing daily stress and anxiety, frustration, a fear of unknown and uncertainty, coping up with this forced isolation and loneliness, trouble sleeping, eating problem. This may be due to spending time at home with our family or loved ones with full of imposed instructions or restriction. This restricted and quarantined life with no busy schedule is creating stress.

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. Stress is your body's reaction to a challenge or demand. Stress can be both Positive and Negative. Positive Stress (Eustress) helps in keeping ourselves well focused in reality. Some amount of Eustress is

normal and may be beneficial during this situation, it will help in gathering right information and facts from accurate sources so that we can easily determine the risk factors and act appropriately. It makes individuals more aware of the current situation. Negative Stress (Distress) on the other hand, occurs when we feel unable to perform or to cope up with the current situation. This feeling can be short or long term. It may cause anxiety or concern and may lead to a number of mental and physical problems. Such as—

- Stress Disorder
- Frustration
- Aggressive Behaviour
- Negative thoughts.
- Feeling of loneliness
- Fear of Uncertainty
- Trouble Sleeping
- Eating Problem
- Other Psychosomatic Problem such as- Headache, Hypertension, upset stomach, Body pain. Gastric ulcer

Some of the recent supporting news update regarding the effect of Covid-19 Pandemic outbreak on our daily life that came into consideration are-

- India's National Commission for Women (NCW) said they received 587 registered domestic violence complaints between March 23 to April 16, 2020 – a

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significant surge from 396 complaints received in the previous 25 days between February 27 to March 22, 2020.

- Most countries globally are seeing a surge in domestic violence, leading to United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appealing to governments to pay attention to and prevent a “horrific global surge in domestic violence” amid lockdown measures.
- According to an India Today report (April, 2020), a letter written by two lawyers to Chief Justice of India SA Bobde, said that during the lockdown though the overall rate of crime had gone down, but incidents of abuse and violence faced by children have risen.
- Of the 3.07 lakh calls received by the ‘CHILDLINE 1098’ helpline for children in distress across the country between March 20-31, 2020, covering the first week of Lockdown, 30% were about protecting against abuse and violence, said Harleen Walia, deputy director of Childline India, The Hindu Newspaper (April, 2020).
- Children are more vulnerable to abuse and violence during coronavirus lockdowns, says UN expert.

From the above stated news update it is very much clear that both adults and children are facing a huge turbulence for maintaining a healthy balanced physical and mental wellbeing during this time of lockdown. Each and everybody are facing a constant challenge of being in quarantine and keeping themselves and their children engaged in healthy activities. One way to manage our moments of distress is to identify our key thoughts or physical sensations that tend to contribute to our cycle of distress and feelings of being overwhelmed. Even if we put our smartphones away and stop gathering the COVID-19 updates from news channels and social media, but our minds can become our worst enemies by replaying those fearful thoughts and worries again and again. Mental health professionals explain that the first simple step towards stopping these thoughts is to simply start noticing them as they happen—being mindful to them. According to the mental health experts, when you realize that you’re lost in thoughts, try to catch yourself, and bring yourself back to the reality and try to engage yourself and others in some activity that’s grounding. Grounding means being engaged in a real activity that helps provide a sense of peace.

I. PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Now, let us find out some solutions of these ongoing issues with the help of some psychological theories or different approaches.

a) Psychoanalytic Approach:

Sigmund Freud, the founder of Psychoanalysis, one of the key concepts of Freud’s theory (1897) is ‘Ego Defence Mechanism’. An Ego defence mechanism is an unconscious psychological mechanism that reduces anxiety arising from unacceptable or potentially harmful stimuli. Defence mechanisms may result in healthy or unhealthy consequences depending on the circumstances and frequency with which the mechanism is used. Ego uses both Mature and Immature defences--- The Mature defences (humour, sublimation, altruism) are defined by a healthy and conscious relationship or connection with reality. On the other hand, Immature psychological

defence mechanisms (projection, passive aggression) play an important role in suppressing emotional awareness and contribute to psychopathology. According to Freud’s Psychoanalytical Theory, one of the main reasons behind this horrific outcome may be due to the use of immature defence mechanism like projection of verbal and physical aggressive behaviour towards self and others which results in the catharsis of negative emotions, anxiety and stress caused by the current situation. Freud also mentions the theory of mature defence mechanism where instead of projecting negative emotions, frustration, anger in an unhealthy way towards self and others, it can be altered into more creative grounding activities which will help us in the catharsis of emotions but in a more mature and healthy way. This is called Sublimation, in which socially unacceptable impulses or idealizations are transformed into more socially acceptable actions or behaviour, possibly resulting in a long-term conversion of the initial impulse.

b) Cognitive Approach:

Our mind and body are intercorrelated with each other, two powerful allies. How you think can affect how you feel. And how you feel can affect your thinking. This means that our thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes can positively or negatively affect our biological functioning. In other words, healthy minds are a reflection of healthy bodies. In psychology it is termed as Psychosomatic problem or disorder in which physical illness or other biological condition caused or aggravated by a mental factor such as internal conflict or stress. According to the Cognitive Behavioural Model, mental disorder is a result of errors or biases in thinking. It explains how thought and information processing can become distorted and leads to maladaptive emotions and behaviour. What is necessary is a change in thinking. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a short-term, goal-oriented psychotherapy treatment that takes a hands-on, practical approach to bring a change in the patterns of thinking or behaviour that are behind people’s difficulties, and so change the way they feel. The goal of this therapy is to teach that we cannot control each and every aspect of our world around us, but can control how to interpret and deal with the things in the environment. Thus, if we want to stay physically fit in this current situation, we need to take care of our mental health.

c) Humanistic Approach:

Erik Erikson, (1902- 1994), German-American developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst, develops a Psychosocial theory of eight stages of child’s development. The second stage of his theory termed as autonomy versus shame and doubt, when children are autonomous, they feel confident that they can make their own choices and decisions. Young children become autonomous when caregivers are supportive and give children the safe space to make their own decisions and to experiment with their bodies and problem-solving skills without shaming or ridiculing the child. When children feel shame and doubt, they believe that they are not capable of making valid decisions and not capable of doing everyday tasks. This will affect the development of

positive self-esteem in children. The third stage termed as initiative versus guilt, when children develop initiative, they continue to develop their self-concept and gain a desire to try new things and to learn new things while being responsible for their actions to some extent. If caregivers continue to give children a safe space to experiment and appropriate stimuli to learn, the children will continue to find their purpose. However, if caregivers try to create too many strict boundaries around what children can do and to force too much responsibility on kids, children will feel extreme guilt for their inability to complete tasks perfectly. The UN estimates that 1.25 billion children are currently at home as a result of the coronavirus lockdown. Many of those children are finding it hard to suddenly cope up with this situation and also parents are juggling like never before as they struggle to teach their children while earning a living during the coronavirus lockdown. Thus, from the concept of Erickson we may conclude that if we engage the children in more creative activities or give them a little autonomy than restricted their life into a small monotonous box, it will help in developing their self-esteem and also helps in maintaining a healthy mental wellbeing not only for the children, for the parents also.

Martin Seligman, (1942- present) often referred to as the founder of positive psychology, describes it as “the scientific study of optimal human functioning that aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive.” Through multiple studies, Martin Seligman found that the extent to which people were aware of and using their signature strengths (for example, courage, persistence, and wisdom) greatly impacted the quality of their lives. He spent years developing a theory of well-being called the PERMA model (2011). The model comprises five elements that create the foundation of a flourishing life: Positive Emotions, Engagement with others, Relationships, Meaning of life, Accomplishments.

- Positive Emotions- This element is, perhaps, the most obvious connection to happiness. Focusing on positive emotions is more than smiling: it is the ability to remain optimistic and view one's past, present, and future from a constructive perspective. A positive view can help in relationships and work, and inspire others to be more creative and take more chances.
- Engagement- Activities that meet our need for engagement flood the body with positive neurotransmitters and hormones that elevate one's sense of well-being. This engagement helps us remain present, as well as synthesize the activities where we find calm, focus, and joy.
- Relationship- Relationships and social connections are crucial to meaningful lives. As humans we are wired with others. Human bonding is the basic need for healthy relationship. We thrive on connections that promote love, intimacy, and a strong emotional and physical interaction with other humans. Positive relationships with one's parents, siblings, peers, co-workers, and friends are a key ingredient to overall joy. Strong relationships also provide support in difficult times that require resilience.

- Meaning of life- a meaningful life is a construct having to do with the purpose, significance, fulfilment, and satisfaction of life. While specific theories vary, there are two common aspects: a global schema to understand one's life and the belief that life itself is meaningful.
- Accomplishment- Having goals and ambition in life can help us to achieve things that can give us a sense of accomplishment. We should make realistic goals that can be met and just putting in the effort to achieving those goals can already give us a sense of satisfaction when we finally achieve those goals a sense of pride and fulfilment will be reached.

Positive perspective can build our physical, intellectual, and social abilities. By broadening our awareness and thought-action repertoire, we look for creative and flexible ways of thinking and acting. Over time, this broadening effect builds skills and resources. People who experience positive emotions make more connections, create more inclusive categories, and have heightened levels of creativity. Positive emotions also help us perform better at time of distress and strengthen our relationships. We can apply the PERMA model in our daily life by—

- Adopting a positive perspective as often as we can. Feeling good, optimism, pleasure and enjoyment.
- Find the things that will make us happy and engage. Engagement in fulfilling work and interesting hobbies.
- Focus on our relationship with family and friends and find ways to connect.
- Search for meaning and lead a life for purpose.
- Savour our accomplishment and strive for further achievement. Ambitions, realistic goals, important achievement.

According to Dwain C. Fehon, PsyD (March, 2020), chief psychologist of Yale New Haven Hospital's psychiatric services, “Being isolated is a significant risk factor for depression and anxiety, and many people rely on work as a way of staying connected to people—or, for our kids and teenagers going to school, as a way to stay connected to friends,”. “Being home for extended periods of time can certainly exacerbate that sense of isolation. I guess we're lucky, in a way, that we're living in a time where social media is such a part of our lives,” he says. “But not everybody is into social media. So, it's important to reach out by phone, to stay connected to friends, family, or co-workers.”

From the above discussion it may be clear that for maintaining a healthy mental health is important for both adults and children to keep themselves engaged in different creative and innovative ways of activities. And perform better in day to day life. This will differ from individual to individual according to their preference and interest. It can be anything like, reading, cooking, singing, dancing, painting, knitting, playing some musical instrument, started writing a daily diary, meditation, home exercise or just sitting alone and spending some ‘me-time’.

1. Start practicing your lost talent and hobby's, can be singing, dancing, painting, reading, or any creative form.

2. Write down what you love about yourself. Don't wait for others, write at least 5 good points or at least one page about yourself a day.
3. Create a happy playlist or make a playlist of our favourite songs. Songs will always make your soul happy.
4. Try yourself in cooking. Cook a nice meal for yourself and others.
5. Learn new things or acquire new skills, it can be anything like any creative activities or simply help other members of your family in doing the domestic chores.
6. Approach your problem with mindfulness. Give yourself a 'Me-time', start doing meditation, yoga or any handsfree exercise at home which will help you in releasing your pent-up negative emotions.
7. We time i.e. spending quality time with your loved ones.
8. Start doing deep breath exercise. Simple take few deep breaths and stretch your body for few minutes.
9. Try to get in touch with your loved ones and family members over phone and other online technologies. It will create a feeling that we all are together; you are alone into this.
10. In addition to all these, Traditional ways of taking care of mental health is also available during this time. Can go for a consultation with mental health care experts if needed over phone or online.
11. Express gratitude to yourself and to the almighty.

Keeping your children entertained and engaged during lockdown can be a real challenge especially if you're trying to balance home-schooling and working from home. Countless innovative ways are there that the parents can try to keep their children engage and mentally healthy.

1. Asking questions: Creativity is all about questioning: parents can ask their children different questions regarding the current situation which are not from their curriculum or syllabus. It will help in flourishing child's thought process and will make them more aware of this current situation.
2. Giving them time: The beauty is that the parents are in control of the time, for once. So, you can give your child some quality time to get on with some wonderful creative task, and they wouldn't have that in school.
3. Thinking outside the box. Creativity is not just about arts and crafts, it's also about the kitchen. Engage your children in some small cooking or make them cook a meal for all under expert guidance. It will create a desire in children to try new things and to learn new skills.
4. Ask your children to try an essay or a paragraph regarding the current situation, it will enhance their understanding about the situation, their thought of action, their feelings, their writing skills. Read and discuss with your children what he/she has written.
5. Encourage them to participate in different discussion in your home regarding household chores. Take their opinion, make themselves feel important valued.
6. Give them different household responsibilities. Allow them to achieve something. Engage them in different household chores.

7. Give them innovative homework. Now a days everything is available on internet. Allows your children to watch some movies which are content appropriate and age appropriate under your guidance. Also, you can give your children a homework of analysing those movies after watching it, discuss their understanding about the concept of the movie. It will not only enhance child's reasoning and thought ability but also will also the child more attentive towards certain tasks.
8. Let them be your teacher. Instead of instructing your children all the time, let them play the role of a teacher or instructor sometime. Let them teach you, be it anything from the curriculum or any other creative skills. Give them that independence or power.

According to mental health professionals, during this lockdown situation, go back and introspect yourself, engage yourself in those creative and positive activities that will give you and others an inner peace of mind. Difficulty in concentrating, low motivation and a state of distraction, distress are to be expected. Adaptation will take time. Go easy on yourself. As everybody is settling into this new rhythm of remote work and isolation, need to be realistic in the goals we set, both for ourselves and others in our charge. Interpretation of any situation depends on us and on our perspective. When we perceive a situation negatively, the outcome will be negative and if we perceive it positively, it gives us positive implications. In everyone's life, there are highs and lows; focusing on "the lows" does increase your chances of developing depression, although the equation for depression is very complicated. Instead of feeling depressed and irritated, people may enjoy the daily tasks in their lives and persevere with challenges they will face by remaining optimistic about eventual outcomes. People find enjoyment in different things, whether it's playing an instrument, playing a sport, dancing, working on an interesting project at work or even just a hobby. We all need something in our lives that absorbs us into the current moment, creating a 'flow' of blissful immersion into the task or activity. This type of 'flow' of engagement stretches our intelligence, skills, and emotional capabilities. In the words of Marie Curie (1867-1934), first woman to win two Nobel Prize in multiple sciences,

"Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less"

Lockdown has given us a chance to unleash our positivity, understanding self, think creatively and contributing effectively to the society. As a responsible citizen, we all need to create a safer and healthier world for us and our future generation.

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