

FD Consultants

Psychosocial Support and Trauma Specialist Services

What has Coronavirus Taught us



Having three sisters that are all teachers I hear a great deal about what is occurring in schools. All around the world schools are trying to get back to some normality, with various levels of success. My community carried out a project asking children what they will miss when the 'coronavirus period' ends.

"Being with family and doing things as a whole family"

"Cycling, walks and having shared meals"

"Free time and lie ins"

"Spending time being more creative"

"More time to do drawing, playing games, baking cakes"

Acknowledging the hardships many of us are experiencing through the Coronavirus period, (and at FD Consultants, our focus is to support anyone who is struggling psychologically), in this article we have decided to focus on the positive lessons Coronavirus has taught us as individuals and organisations.

Creativity – I continue to be amazed at the creative ideas that have sprung up since Lockdown. At FD Consultants we facilitate a 'Stress Management and Resilience Building' workshop for organisations and individuals. We help participants to create a wellbeing plan referring to the RESPECT model of Resilience (Dunkley, 2018). Creativity is one of the factors we discuss to increase our resilience levels. The part of the brain that is activated when we are creative reduces the body's stress response. As our social interactions have had to change dramatically people have tuned into online theatre, orchestra, and musical performances. People are learning instruments, languages, improving DIY or gardening skills. Individuals in our workshops have shared their resources such as, writing, photography, painting, sewing, cooking, dance off videos, and growing fruit and vegetables. Organisations are thinking creatively about how to stay productive in these unprecedented times. See if there is one thing you can include in your wellbeing plan that is a creative activity.

Patience – I was walking down my high street last week reading over and over again the signs in the shop windows, 'closed until further notice', often followed by messages of hope and pictures of rainbows. During the 2011 London riots I was living in west London. I remember carrying my bike down one road as it was littered with shards of glass from smashed shop windows. As I felt tears well up in my eyes, I read a sign on a boarded-up shop window, 'We will be back, stronger and better'. I have kept a photo of that message and refer to it every time I need a boost of reassurance. It teaches me patience. We are a world that is operating at great speed, with a ferocious appetite for reduced cost and quick fixes, habitually throwing quality to the wind. Coronavirus has forced us to slow down, press the brake pedal and take a deep breath. I have witnessed clients arrive in my counselling room stating that they feel they haven't breathed properly for years. I have experienced participants attending our workshops rushing from one meeting, and as soon as the workshop finishes, rushing to another. Where is the pause button? If you don't have one, create one, give yourself permission to book in pause moments between meetings, take some deep breaths, and experience the healing power of good quality breathing.

Staying connected – I am logging into family get togethers and social nights with friends via Zoom. I have family all over the world, but we haven't connected on this level before, and perhaps this is something we will continue to do after this period. My social nights have included, pampering nights (group of girlfriends wearing facemasks), wine tasting, sharing music, silly performances (trying to teach my puppy to jump through a Hola hoop - unsuccessful as yet!), and face painting, to name a few. My street has setup a WhatsApp group, and I now feel a sense of community that I hadn't felt before. Social connections are another factor we discuss in our RESPECT resilience model (Dunkley, 2018). As

a therapist I am most concerned about an individual who is becoming isolated. Watch out for your local neighbours, colleagues, or friends who may be disconnecting.

Acts of Kindness – This month at FD Consultants we are focusing on Acts of Kindness and sharing some of the projects we have been involved in since the Coronavirus period began. Research shows that ‘kindness’ is good for us. It gives us a sense of purpose, increases our empathy and self-worth. Some research has even suggested it keeps us young and reduces our stress levels. Kindness stimulates the production of serotonin, endorphin and oxytocin, our feel-good hormones. It heightens feelings of compassion, consideration and warmth. Some of the acts of kindness we have witnessed over the last few months include, care packages to the vulnerable, donating produce to food banks, knitting hearts and rainbows for the NHS, and promoting small local businesses. Kindness also relates to being kind to ourselves. There is a mindfulness exercise you can download on our website to practice self-compassion called ‘compassionate mindfulness’. If you wish to practice it use the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yabvvsue>

Flexible Working – Many organisations didn’t believe working from home would be productive. In some circumstances the Coronavirus period has proved otherwise. A great deal of work has been successfully adapted to online and remote home working for staff. Another benefit of working from home is the reduction in travel time to work and, for some, more flexibility to juggle childcare with workload. As organisations plan to return to the workplace and develop risk assessments, flexible working may become part of the new normal. As individuals we have all had to learn to adapt and become more flexible, in our work and home lives. Continue to build on these skills as research states that one of the virtues of resilience is being adaptable.

Open Leadership – As therapists we have been challenged in a way that we have never been before, we are living and breathing the crisis that we are supporting our clients with. This has led us to share more of how we are personally impacted, with an attitude that we are all in this together. At FD Consultants we offer consultancy to leadership and senior management teams. We have found good leadership refers to, not just emotional intelligence, but being able to translate ‘emotion as intelligence’ (Dunkley, 2018). This means listening to the emotional voice of staff within an organisation and having the skills to translate this into intelligence about the work and the organisational culture. Additionally, good management includes relational skills and being able to share something of ourselves. As Brene Brown states in her video ‘sympathy verses empathy’, to be truly empathic we need to connect to a similar feeling within ourselves to connect with the other; empathy “is feeling with people”. This type of leadership is built on strength rather than power and creates a more resilient workforce.

Appreciation – At this time, displays of gratitude for key workers has been unparalleled. Gratitude improves our wellbeing, empathy for others, creates a sense of community (we are all in this together), and increases our resilience. Many people have stated how much their appreciation for the smaller things in life has improved, including, a smile, being in nature, and the beauty of our environment. Note down all the smaller things in life that you have learnt to appreciate over the last few months.

About FD Consultants

For organisations looking for employee psychological support, FD Consultants are the trauma specialists and well-being service who will best deliver a reliable, quick, and bespoke support system in the workplace. FD Consultant’s team of accredited specialists will offer ongoing support to help manage stress, prevent burnout and provide specialist trauma care where required, enabling your staff with the tools to cope, and recover more quickly.