

The Trauma of Being Quarantined and Its Coping Strategies

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ABSTRACT: The Psychological impact of COVID -19 in terms of infection, ramification of epic proportion resulting in Quarantine and lockdown is unparalleled in modern history of mankind. As this is a unique situation ever faced by humans of the present times it is imperative to analyse the resultant outcomes which is manifested as Psychological challenges like stress, depression, frustration, confusion, confrontation and deterioration in general and mental health among individuals and societies in this global village confronted by this disease. Thus this paper is highly relevant at this juncture which besides bringing out the impacts and repercussions of the present scenario, elaborates at length the ways and means of coping, cooperating, coordinating, coexisting, confronting, containing and combating this menace with concerted efforts, responsible behaviour, cooperative and collaborative endeavours so that people of this global village feel together, assist each other and stay united to overcome COVID -19 thereby restoring normalcy, peace, mental health, psychological wellbeing and prosperity among individuals, communities and Nations at large.

Key Words:

COVID-19, Pandemic, Quarantine, Lockdown, Global Village, Mental Health, Stress, Depression, Anxiety, Psychological wellbeing, Boredom, Burnout, Focus on the positives, Stay connected, Proactive, Compassionate and Cooperate.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

The quarantine and lockdown, though very inevitable in the current scenario, some unanswerable questions lingers in our minds viz Are we happy? Are we mentally healthy? Are we comfortable during this period of quarantine? Of course Corona Virus pandemic is also taking a toll on everyone of our mental health, as Lori Burkett, a Clinical Psychologist says, "Even with connection through the internet, there can still be an underlying feeling of anxiety that overwhelms individuals". It is an undeniable fact that people across the world are susceptible to periods of Stress, Anxiety, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Anger, Frustration, Boredom to depression, Fear due to Economic Crisis, Mental Pressure and the resulting serious Mental Toll. This is one of the biggest challenges that Quarantine throws in front of us.

STRESS:

Some people can tolerate much greater stress while some others can't. The tolerance to stress is not the same with all. As Hans Selye, a Canadian Physiologist says, "We react to Physical and Psychological Stress in three stages – The Alarm Reaction, The Stage of Resistance and The Stage of Exhaustion". The outbreak of COVID-19 and its blistering spread leads every human being to enormous stress and we are probably at the second stage of stress i.e., Stage of Resistance. Physical symptoms and other signs of strain begin to show out, as we struggle against increasing Psychological disorganisation. We intensify our use of both Direct and Defensive Psychological coping strategies. If our efforts succeed in reducing stress, we return to a more normal state, but if the stress is extreme or prolonged we may turn out being desperate.

ANXIETY:

Right from the beginning when Corona Virus became epidemic in China, people of neighbouring countries were affected with the fear that anytime this furious weapon may attack them. Why are we so afraid of this Novel Corona Virus? The anxiety may be due to the perception of the public that this new illness certainly is frightening and that it needs attention, may be that many people die out of it and the foremost reason is the hidden face of this virus – its carriers who are asymptomatic. Man started getting afraid of seeing his peer. Questions such as, Will he be a carrier? Has it already been transmitted to me? What will happen to me if I get the illness? Will I be saved? What will happen to my family? wander in our minds, causing anxiety. This anxiety has gone up to the extent that we come across many people who subject themselves to screening even in

case of a normal cold or flu. We could feel our heart pounding even if one of our own family members sneeze or coughs during this period of quarantine.

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS SYMPTOMS, FRUSTRATION AND ANGER:

It is seen that longer periods of Quarantine gets associated with Post Traumatic Stress Symptoms, Avoidance and Anger. We feel frustrated and bored due to confinement, loss of regular routine and diminished social and physical contact with others and having inadequate basic supplies (food, water and other essential commodities) during quarantine. This frustration may lead to anger which in turn gets distorted to our loved ones as well. One recently conducted review by Samantha K. Brooks et.al, on Psychological Impact of Quarantine using three databases of 3166 papers, reported negative psychological effects including Post Traumatic Stress symptoms, confusion and anger with people quarantined. In the same study, it was found that, quarantined staff belonging to vital departments were significantly more likely to report exhaustion, detachment from others, anxiety, irritability, insomnia, and indecisiveness. As said in the study, it is true that it also becomes difficult for a person to cope with frustration because they often lead to self devaluation, develop a feeling of incompetence. Since frustration is an emotional condition of extreme tension, the frustrated person tends to experience high levels of discomfort and stress. According to Coleman, the famous Psychologist, there are four basic sources of frustration – Delays, Lack of Sources, Losses and failure, which are possible factors that promote frustration during the period of quarantine.

BOREDOM TO DEPRESSION:

Being without work or due to disturbed routine rhythm of work schedule and altered biological clock, every individual feels isolated and confined to his home or locality. This will in turn tamper moods which may lead to general sense of sadness. This unfamiliar lethargy and depressed energy levels which are not positive for our mental wellbeing, ultimately leads to depression and feeling of loneliness without having much physical contact with the outside world. While the elderly and the middle aged sections of the society could very well get adjusted to this situation the youth especially children and students find it difficult to adapt themselves to this type of quarantine and lockdown.

FEAR DUE TO ECONOMIC CRISIS:

The economic crisis does surface in any Country irrespective of its fiscal strength, reserve or resources in the event of the global crisis as like this pandemic – COVID 19. While the rich and the affluent sections of the population very well overcome the situation, the mediocre, poor and the marginalised find it very difficult to manage the situation for want of earnings for their daily livelihood. This financial crisis as such would very much affect these sections of the society eventually leading to fear and psychological distress as they are not very sure and confident about the normalisation of the situation which will enable them to get engaged for various job or work.

MENTAL PRESSURE:

We human are greatly sensitive to mental pressures, however its appraisal differs considerably from person to person based on how one perceives the pressure stimuli, in this case – the period of quarantine. We encounter mental pressure as like encountering pressure on our skin. Thus one's pressure experience differs according to factors such as its source, the personality trait of the individual concerned and also the internalisation of the pressurising event. Although the degree of mental pressure that a person experiences differs from one another, the source of it is common and the same to all at this juncture – the quarantine and the resulting social isolation. Among the most significant and consistent of these are the so seemingly relentless demands that one has to compete with and understand the unthinkable rapid spread of this life threatening disease – The Novel Corona Virus, while being able to clearly sketch out on the landscape of our minds, what had happened in China and Italy. How a person adapts to the pressure evoked by such situations is partly a function of his/her emotional stability and personality makeup. While the afore said is self explanatory on one side, it is also paramount to know that prolonged pressure in a person will result in gradual deterioration in performance and lead to several other negative effects, that becomes more commonplace in people with low pressure tolerance capabilities and who always keep tensed and stressed over a stimuli.

TIPS TO SAFEGUARD MENTAL HEALTH:

ENCOUNTERING BOREDOM:

For this one has to stay socially, physically and mentally active and engaged. Keep in touch with the outside world via Telephone, Mobile, whatsapp, video chat, Internet etc, so that we don't feel alone and isolated. Exercise, Yoga, Praying, Meditation ,Gardening, Reading and Writing books and Articles, Cooking, Washing, Painting, Drawing, Sewing ,Embroidery, Listening and Playing Music Instrument, Tailoring, Puppetry,

Carpentry, Handy craft, Interior Decoration, Watching TV and Movies will keep ourselves others at home motivated and active with a positive outlook of being engaged as well making the best use of the time at home with the optimism that the pandemic will be over soon. Besides the above suggested activities many more could be conceived in an improvised way and manner that could be worked out according to one's need or necessity.

AVOIDING BURNOUT:

While it is important to keep fit at home during these times, it is equally important to avoid burnout. As such a balanced approach towards work or activity undertaken is of paramount importance. Hence various activities should be planned and structured according to one's age, skills, knowledge, experience and health status. Towards this end diet and food habits should be well balanced so that metabolism is done at ease and sufficient amount of calories required for the work at home are made available. In this context it is also pointed out that problems related to skin and stomach should be avoided and if persists along with a craving for alcohol then it should be construed as an alarm of Psychological burnout.

FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE ATTITUDE:

Be positive, optimistic, hopeful, and confident that normalcy will soon return back on earth. As this is not a health emergency localised to any one country or state it is essential that we focus our attention on the positive developments and all out efforts taken by Government of India and that of other Countries in the world to contain COVID – 19. This positive approach towards Government initiatives is essential not only to boost our morale but also that of the Society and Community at large. This attitude of being receptive and cooperative to all Government initiatives would create a positive energy and remove or keep all negative thoughts and emotions at bay.

STAY CONNECTED:

While social distancing is indispensable, mandatory and has to be scrupulously adhere to & complied with as directed by Government of India and WHO it does not mean that we should not interact or communicate with others. There are ample ways of communicating with others and all such means has already mentioned could be tapped and put to usage so that although SD is maintained and physical interaction and contact with others are avoided we will nevertheless keep in touch with others around us and with the world outside through e-gadgets, press and media. This e-contact or communication will very much keep this global village together, connected and well informed.

BE PROACTIVE TO MANAGE STRESS:

Keeping ourselves alert, connected, well informed, ready and equipped is the need of the hour which removes the factors and precursors of stress that may arise in any individual, family or community. Keeping essential items ready at hand (Medicine, water, Groceries, Fruits, Vegetables etc) to be used for few days is one way of avoiding stress as these are very much required for our livelihood and survival during lockdown and quarantine. This readiness with cash and kind will not only help individuals but also the entire community to remain indoors and resort to self quarantine. In addition to this proactive initiative at home precautions may be taken to avoid mass gathering for any purpose at any place for any reason where social distancing could not be followed. Avoiding unnecessary travel by any mode to other regions or state as well minimal usage of public transport are other proactive initiatives to combat and contain this pandemic.

TO BE COMPASSIONATE:

Empathy and sympathy are two related terms or characteristics that contribute a lot in the formation of the Personality of an Individual. As such to be empathetic, sympathetic, compassionate, considerate, caring, sharing and concerned about others needs especially during these days of pandemic is the right humanistic approach to be manifested by any individual, family or community. While material and monetary assistance is highly welcome and required at this juncture, nevertheless social moral, spiritual, physical and psychological support extended to others in need would very well strengthen the bond of brotherhood and human relationship between individuals and members of family and community. This type of assistance, tolerance, sharing and compassion expressed at this point of time will strengthen hope and confidence in the minds of people and enhance the feeling of being secure, cared and united.

COOPERATE WITH GOVERNMENT AND STATE:

It is our foremost duty as responsible citizens of our Country to obey all directives and enforcement of the state. The orders and instructions of the Government should be totally adhered to and complied with the best interest of the Country. This social responsibility to sincerely, willingly whole heartedly and strictly follow all Government decisions would result in the spread of this disease under control there by order could be brought in

for effective implementation of plans and programmes towards eradication COVID -19. Every word we speak, every message we convey and every expression of our thought brought out in the print, press and electronic media should be highly measured, verified, and legally admissible in such a manner that they don't create panic thereby causing stress or anxiety in the minds of people. Instead of criticizing or commenting upon any plan or policy of the state Government at this juncture, people of all Countries should all join hands and work together along with their Governments to strengthen the Government missionary to effectively combat COVID -19.

II. CONCLUSION:

Therefore in the light of the above and in the given situation it is imperative to state that a concerted effort is very much required and every individual/ citizen in this global village has to sincerely involve himself and contribute his share through his very responsible behaviour, and whole hearted cooperation so that this pandemic could be very soon eradicated and peace, health and prosperity restored and rejuvenated around the Globe.

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