

Beating January Blues

Last May – an age ago - Amy J Cuddy tweeted **All Crises have Three Psychological Phases:**

Emergency: shared clear goals and urgency make us feel energized and focused, and even productive

Regression: we realize the future is uncertain, lose sense of purpose, get tired, irritable, withdrawn and less productive

Recovery: we begin to reorient, revise our values, goals, expectations and roles, and begin to focus on moving beyond instead of just getting by

All of this is **normal** reaction to an abnormal situation

So where are we now? Probably in phases 2 and 3, in a marathon relay. COVID 19 definitely likes winter, and people in close contact. Rates have risen over the last months. In England some ICUs are full, and expanded into theatres or elsewhere. Rates are now starting to fall, and the vaccine is being rolled out, thousands of doses already given, thousands more each week.

At vaccine centres, there is great team enthusiasm, and palpable relief for the recipients as soon as immunised, whether elderly, vulnerable or health and social care staff. Even the very invitation to come in brings relief from fear and worry, especially for the elderly

Those in the front line, and all support staff, whether Primary or Secondary Care, Health or Social Care, Care Homes and others have been working above design capacity, and (it feels at the front end) above design capability for some time. This risks staff exhaustion – which makes the next thoughts ever more important, because there are no quick answers:

- Keep hydrated – water and others. Even 2% dehydration substantially changes concentration levels and fatigue. Keep a bottle or drinker near you – and use it
- Listen to your bladder! – postponing a wee puts stress on the whole system – and going for the wee involves activity (exercise even!), movement and change of scene (hint, nice pictures from old calendars on backs of loo doors brings a smile to an otherwise preoccupied event – if health and safety permits, of course)
- Move frequently – muscles are designed to move, not stay frozen in fixed positions. Exercise is great for burning off surface adrenaline – think just ten stand-up and sit-downs, ten star jumps or ten seconds of running on the spot
- Take care to breath regularly, slowly and deeply (helps bring parasympathetic calm)
- Take breaks - short changes of routine, of task or even of posture, can help us
- Connect with your team, check in 'How are you doing?' and listen for the answer. Maybe a buddy system to check on each other

- Meals – don't miss or skip – ensure good quality food to nourish your body
- Have a personal philosophy and practice (even if it's just getting through today, now!)
- And sleep, blessed sleep, device free and on airplane mode, bedroom free from distraction
- Ensure one day off each week is work free, and ensure you do something(s) that nourish your body, mind and soul

Keeping our own fuel tanks or batteries topped up in these regular ways can help us avoid the complete exhaustion that can so easily happen if we continue to work beyond capacity

Good Luck and Go Well

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