

Ideas for your work with clients and for yourself

I originally started putting these together as ideas that were helpful in my individual work with clients and for training. However, I have found many of them to be just as useful to myself. I decided to begin to put some together a collection. I've included ones that are particularly useful now, and take the tried and true as granted. Send your ideas to <https://www.selfcareproject.com.au/contact/> and I'll include those I can.

The key is to consider them, adapt them to yourself, and put them together in new ways that work for you. Sometimes we have to persevere with what we do as we see if they will work after a bit of time, but this is much different from forcing them, thinking you should be doing them, or that we are somehow inadequate if we can't put them in place. A good dose of compassion, understanding and kindness towards yourself is recommended.

What's good for one person can definitely be unhelpful and create further destabilization in others. Your judgement and way of delivery is important. Peter

New ways of responding

I've found that many of my clients, as well as myself, have had to look at new ways of steadying, and managing as the tried and true methods don't seem to be effective. It's nearly like the upheaval calls for different responses and the search for, and the discovery of these. Things that I had discarded in the past as not 'fitting me', are helping now. Be on the look out for what might help, and notice what is helpful. The signs of what might be helpful are often subtle and more like hints and clues that we need to follow.

In the midst of this

This encourages people not to try to overcome or get rid of their responses, but to do something in the midst of what they are experiencing. More realistic for many and helps counteract the 'I've got to change this' trap.

Your response is ok and expected

Being uptight, feeling anxious, scared, overwhelmed, thrown, or feeling like you have lost your footing, is part of what happens. It is expected and ok. It's not a problem but something to watch and to see if it becomes problematic. Often I will talk about it being part of a phase, and it takes (sometimes I will add the words 'a little time') for our normal coping strategies to re engage and for us to discover new ones. It's a matter of judging if we really need to do something and how much, or if it is just part of the whole thing. A judgement thing and personal preference for each person.

Symbols of hope

This idea stemmed from a manager who was struggling to find solidity in the present. We came up with the idea of identifying 'symbols of hope' that he could put up on his wall or around him. I decided to do this for myself. When talking about this with another worker their symbol of hope was going possum spotting in the evenings, and realizing that nature and the world around them didn't have the virus. The symbols can be objects, behaviours, values and beliefs – whatever might come to the person.

As I go about this?

How do I want to be as I go about what I'm doing? I have found many people can't make use of this question in the context of COVID - 19, but some can. I've found it tends to be more useful when thinking about things like 'when I interact with my family, how do I want to be, or a specific part of the virus context and what they are doing e.g. 'As I go about doing this task how do I want to be?'. Some similar questions follow which I've found more useful.

Taking a stand

What stand would you like to take. Similar to the question above, but a bit more value based. It encourages you to say in the midst of this, I want to do The wording encourages mobilization, and clarifying and coming back to what's important to you. It's not useful for some people who are feeling lost and can make them feel more hopeless that they can't gather themselves.

How do I want to be as I come through this?

Sometimes the here and now is too much and too overwhelming. This question looks to the future and as a default you start to bring that into the now and steer towards it.

Counter balance

This takes the paying attention to what's positive and good idea and puts it in the context of 'because this is happening, I will do' as a way of balancing out the upheaval, destabilization and hurt that many in the world are experiencing. It encourages a sense of purpose, context and personal agency. All useful things to promote if the situation allows it.

Connect to life

In the midst of the forces that are disconnecting us from life giving things, what things give life to you? What things, even if they are really small moments, nourish and feed you? These things give us capacity and even small connections to these things, if and when they come, help us in the here and now, and how we will come through this.

Honour life

Similar to the above question but more of a sense of value and meaning behind it. Are there small ways in which you can honour life in the midst of what's happening?

What's needed now/timing

This is about reading where you are and responding to that. I sometimes draw a bell curve and then a horizontal line near the top of the curve. I talk about that when you are above the line the normal ways of coping don't work because you are so caught up in your response. The line can move depending on a whole range of factors such as the circumstance, the day, etc. What's needed above the line is damage control and managing as best you can. You can try to do some coping strategies like breathing etc and see if they work or if you should persevere, but feel free abandon if they don't and revisit later to see if you've got a bit more capacity on board to respond. Repeat as necessary. Later might be 5 minutes, 5 hours, a day, week, or month. When you try, be careful of trying too much or too hard. It's about taking the pressure off and often this helps natural coping to emerge.