

COVID-19 Crisis Response Information and Tools

When communities have experienced a traumatic event like COVID-19, it makes complete sense that our nervous systems get thrown out of balance.

We can be left feeling:

- shocked
- distressed
- afraid
- on edge
- irritable
- disconnected
- angry
- numb
- hundreds of other ways.

Whatever people are experiencing, the first step is to know that it is perfectly normal and biologically hard-wired—the autonomic nervous system’s response to extreme threat or danger.

Hard-Wired for Survival

Our brains are wired for survival, and for connection. When our brains experience threat or danger, we may go into fight or flight, and if that isn’t possible, we can go into freeze.

These are survival responses that can keep us alive when we are in danger, but often, even after the threat has passed (sometimes even a long time after), we can end up feeling *stuck* on fight or flight, or amped up (like there is too much energy in our nervous system) or stuck on freeze, or shut down (when we are depleted of energy.) We may also find ourselves feeling “triggered” by many things in our environment (like people standing too close to us).

***You may feel amped up or shut down,
or go back and forth between the two.
However you feel, know that it is
normal.***

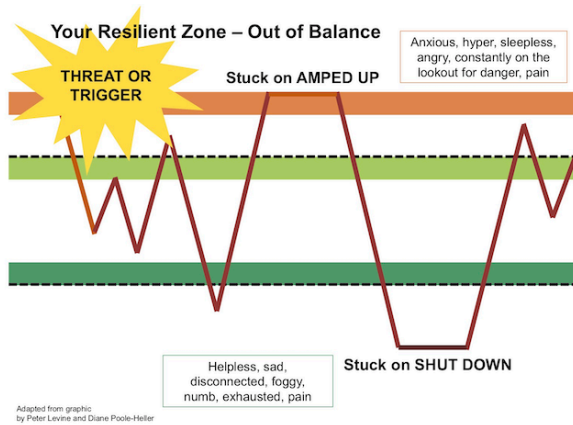
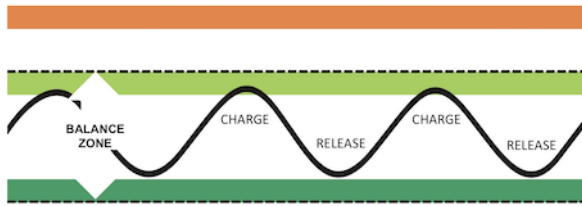
Many of you may not feel safe right now. For nurses, your response is likely to be amplified. Whether people are feeling amped up, or shut down, or going back and forth between the two, it is normal.

Getting Back into our Resilient Zones

Reconnect for Resilience™ and other somatic modalities talk about the experience of being in our Resilient Zone, when rather than feeling amped up or shut down, we are calm, relaxed, and alert, we can think clearly to solve problems, we are not overwhelmed by stress and we can connect to the people we feel safe with.

The following suggestions may help individuals get back in to their Resilient Zone, or restore some sense of calm or comfort, for brief or extended periods, in the coming days or weeks.

Your Resilient Zone



Tools for settling the nervous system

1. **Sense In**

Only if it feels ok, try to *sense in* to your physical experience in the present moment, noticing the difference between being amped up, shut down, or in your Resilient Zone. See if you can notice the difference between:

Sensations of distress:

- tight muscles and tension
- queasiness
- accelerated heartrate
- shallow breathing
- exhaustion

Sensations of calm or even just *better*:

- slower, deeper breathing
- slower heartrate
- more relaxed muscles
- feeling sturdier and more settled

2. **Highlight**

Try asking yourself, or ask one another, some of these questions:

- What or who is helping you get through right now?
- What or who is helping you the most?
- Is there anything or anyone who is giving you hope right now?
- After work, how do you remind yourself that you are OK?
- Is there anything you are doing right now that is making you feel safer?
- Who or what are some of the things you feel need to happen to help yourself, family or community right now?

As you answer these questions, if it feels ok, notice what happens with your breathing, your muscle tension, and your heart rate, for example. If you feel better physically, spend a few extra moments noticing where in your body you feel better or more relaxed.

3. **Rapid Reset**

Rapid Reset tools help calm our nervous system and restore a sense of safety in the present moment. Simple things like:

- orienting (looking around your immediate environment and counting the number of things that are a certain color)
- taking a big sip of water
- taking a walk
- grounding

can help us get back into our Resilient Zone.

Grounding

To practice grounding, bring your attention to yourself sitting in your chair. Notice the support of the back of the chair on your back and as you feel that support, notice what happens with your heart rate, breathing and muscle tension. Next bring your attention to your seat and notice the support of the chair under your seat. As you feel the support,

notice what happens with your heart rate, breathing and muscle tension. Finally, bring your attention down your legs and into your feet. Feel your feet on the floor and notice what happens with your heart rate, breathing and muscle tension.

4. Resource

Resources can be anything positive that helps us feel better. Resources include positive experiences and memories that may include the people, places, activities, skills, hobbies, and animals that we know and love. They include experiences, values and beliefs that sustain, support and give us inner confidence and meaning. These may be personal characteristics such as kindness, compassion and humor, or physical resources such as strong legs, straight spine, being fit, etc.

Resource Practice:

To practice the resource tool, think of a resource, putting as much detail into the image as possible. Try to include as many of your senses as possible, for example, if you're thinking about your dog, think about what it feels like to pet him, how he smells (if pleasant), what he sounds like. As you think of the resource, notice what happens with your breathing, heart rate, and muscle tension.

5. Connect

Lastly and most importantly, human beings are neurobiologically wired for *connection*. As much as possible spend time with people you feel safe with in the coming days and weeks—even if it's virtually. Let people know you care about them, that they make sense to you, and that you can support each other through this difficult time *together*.

If you need more support, please contact Aspire Counseling Group at 919-229-9834 or info@aspiregroupnc.com or go to www.AspireGroupNC.com. We will get you connected to help.

For additional information or to schedule a training, please contact Resources for Resilience at information@resourcesforresilience.com or visit us on the web at www.resourcesforresilience.com