

# BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF COVID-19 **Workplace Trends, Resources, and Strategies**

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## Agenda



**Defining  
key terms**



**What to expect  
from a behavioral  
health standpoint  
over the next few  
months**



**Understanding  
impacts to you and  
your teams**



**Strategies for  
increasing  
resilience**

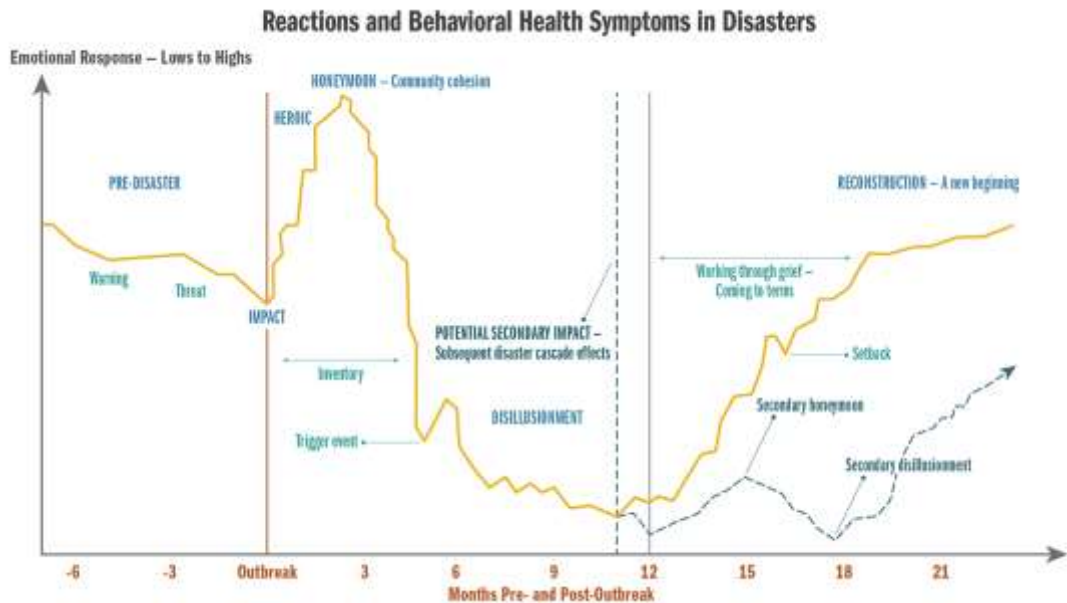
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## Definitions

- **Burnout:** Exhaustion of body, mind, and motivation due to exposure to prolonged and unresolved work stress or frustration. Burnout is often a consequence of perceived disparity between the demands of the job and the resources that an employee has available to them.
- **Compassion fatigue:** Emotional and physical exhaustion leading to a diminished ability to empathize or feel compassion for others, also described as secondary traumatic stress.
- **Moral injury:** Strong feelings of guilt, shame, or anger due to not being able to provide the kind of care or service you want and expect to provide.
- **Resilience:** The process – involving behaviors, thoughts, and actions – of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress. Can be developed by focusing on connection, purpose, and flexibility/adaptability.
- **Resilience factors:** Conditions that help a person survive during and recover from a crisis or trauma- usually internal strengths and external resources.

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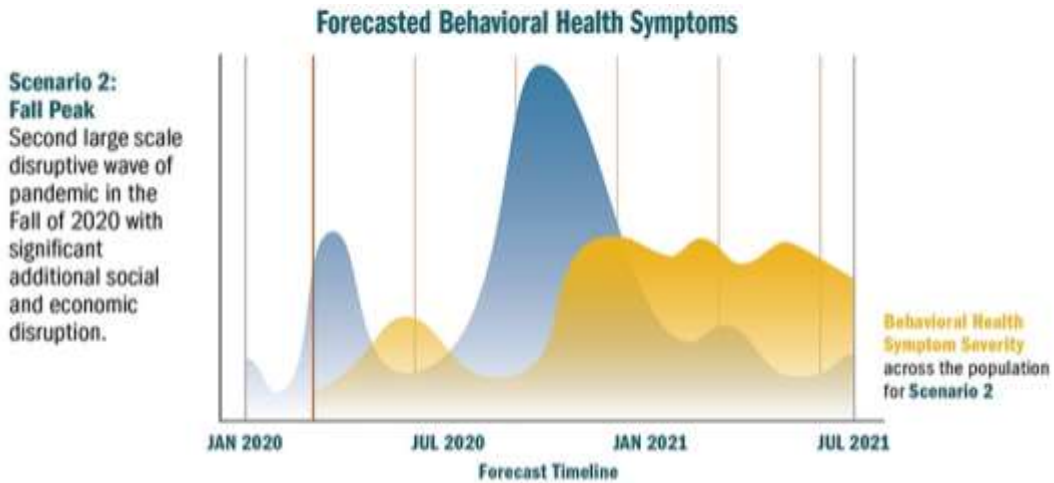
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## Behavioral Health Symptom Severity Forecast Timeline



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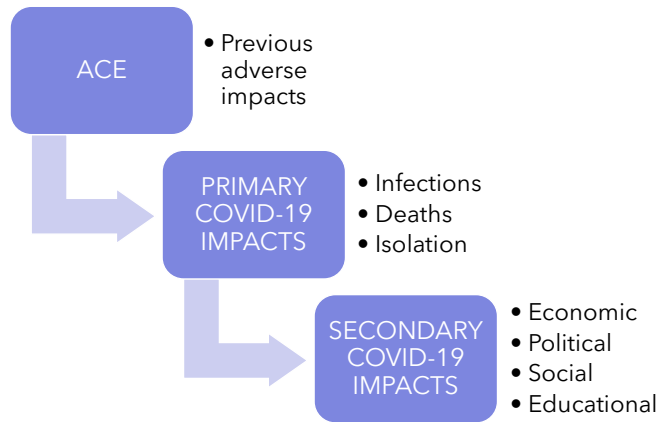
### Key Things to Know

- **Three to four million** Washingtonians will likely experience *clinically significant* behavioral health symptoms within the next several months.
  - Depression, anxiety, and acute stress will likely be the most common.
  - Adolescents, teens, young adults, and older adults may need extra support.
- **Substance use related challenges are expected to continue.**
- **Pandemic apathy will drive acting “out” and acting “in.”**
  - Acting “out”: Pretending like the pandemic no longer applies, refusing to comply with regulations, trying to act in a ‘business as usual’ capacity.
  - Acting “in”: Giving up on things getting back to normal, hopelessness and withdrawal, many symptoms consistent with major depressive disorder or depression generally.
- **An eventual return to baseline levels of functioning** for many people should occur around 14-18 months after the initial outbreak (May–July 2021), given the vaccine distribution timeline as an essential contributor to hope for many.

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## Trauma Cascade Potential



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## Burnout, Compassion Fatigue, Moral Injury, and Exhaustion

### Workplace burnout and similar phenomena continues to increase over time.

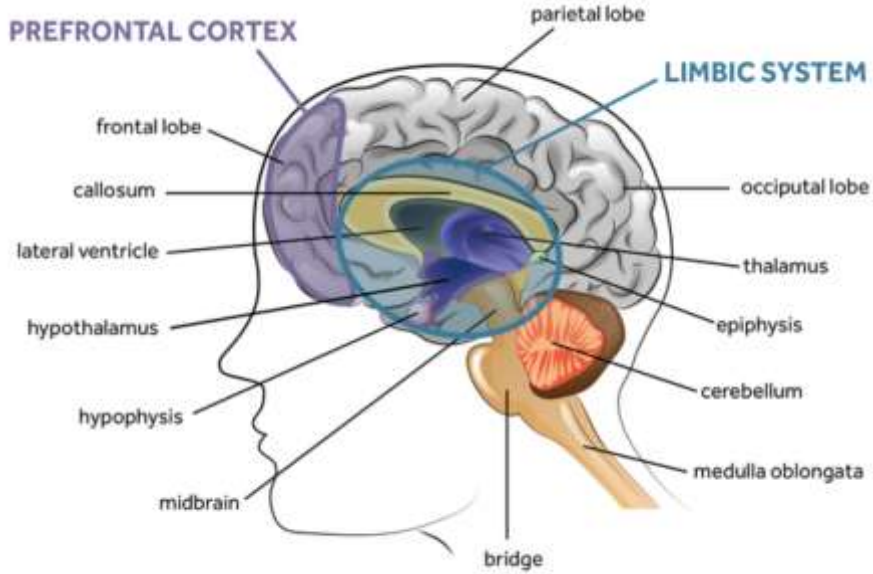
- Compounded by other factors, such as mental health stigma, PPE access, and added work.
- Burnout: Exhaustion of body and mind, unequal balance of demands and resources.
- Compassion fatigue: Emotional/physical tiredness, less ability to empathize.
- Moral injury: Strong feelings of guilt, shame, or anger due to not being able to provide the kind of care or service they want and expect to provide.

### General fatigue, exhaustion, and feeling overwhelmed are common experiences.

- Sleep problems, diminished cognitive and high-level thinking, and increased impacts of existing behavioral health symptoms, such as depression, anxiety, or trauma.
- Organizations should address staff wellness and resilience, make it a priority, and model it.
- Practicing self-care, building personal coping/resilience plans, and rest are key for individuals.

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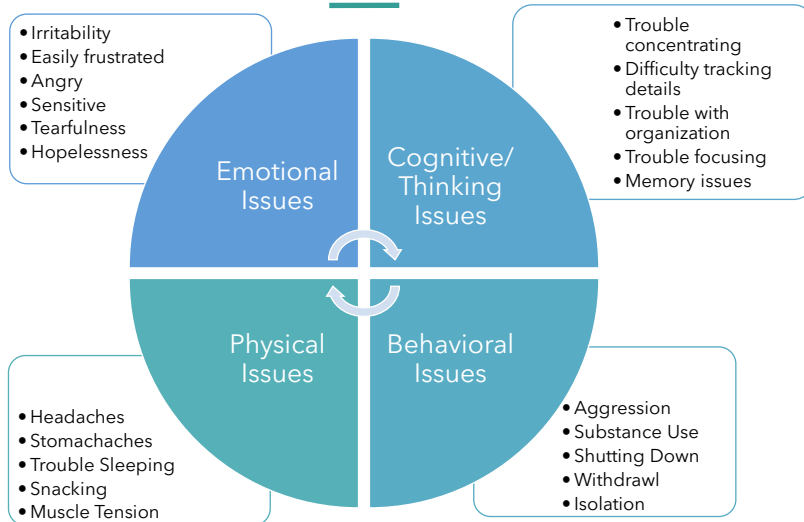
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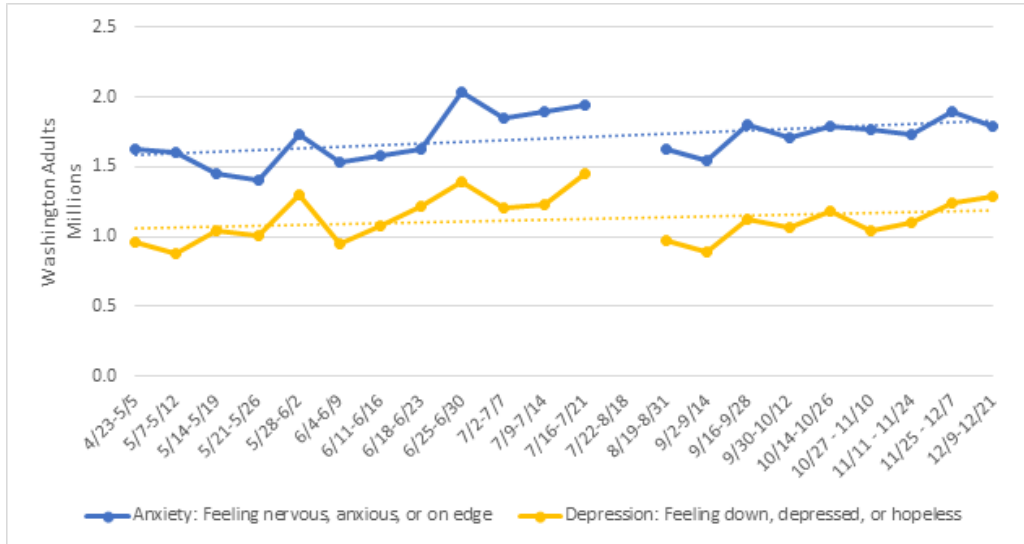
### Common Responses



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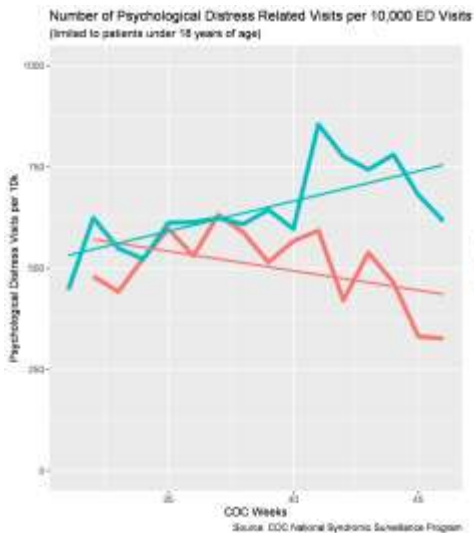
## Anxiety and Depression in WA Adults



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## Psychological Distress – Under 18



- **CDC weeks 31–46**  
(approximately late July to mid-November)
- Weekly emergency department (ED) visits in 2020 involving psychological distress for people under age 18 are up, on average, by 54 visits per week (per 10,000 visits), compared to 2019.

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## The Good News

Typical long-term response to disasters is resilience, rather than disorder. Resilience is something that can be intentionally taught, practiced, and developed for people across all groups.

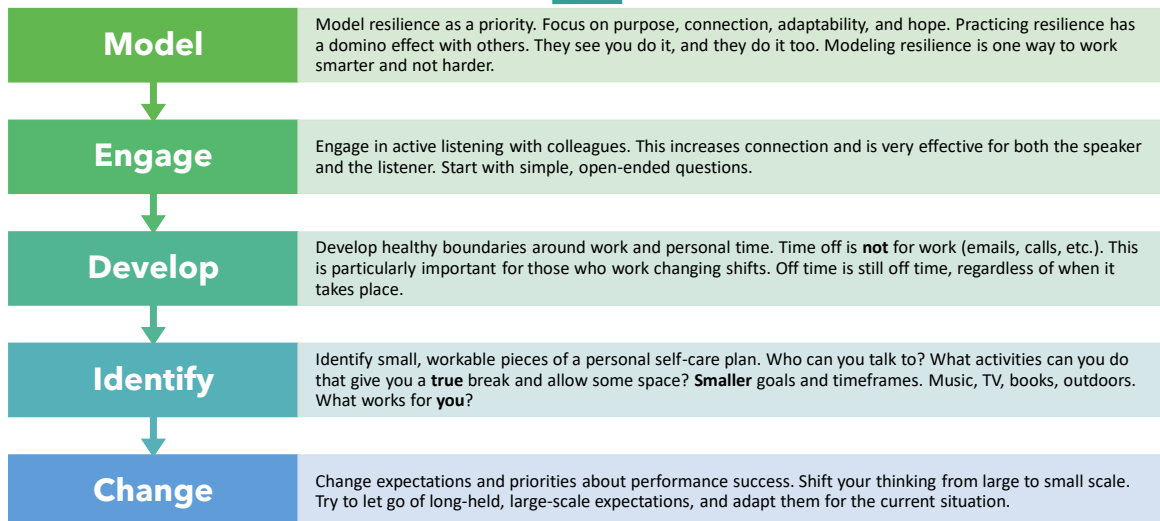
**Resilience** can be increased by:

- Focusing on developing social **connections**, big or small.
- Reorienting and developing a sense of **purpose**.
- Becoming **adaptive** and psychologically **flexible**.
- Focusing on **hope**.

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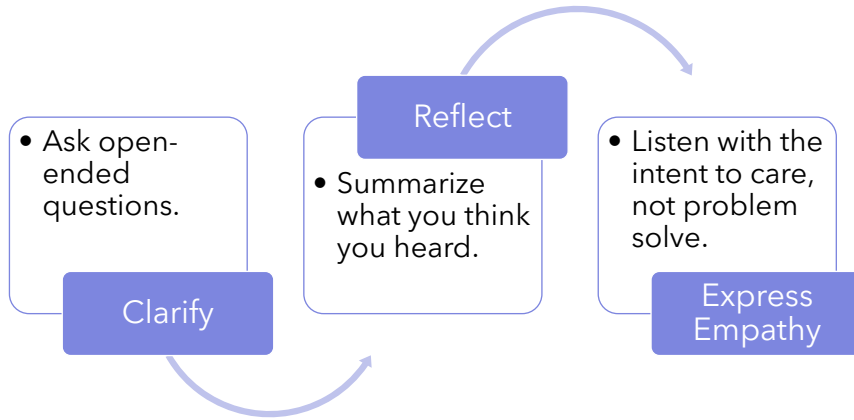
## What can we **do** that doesn't add **more** work? **MEDIC Model** for Disaster Recovery



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## Active Listening



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## Communication Issues

- Remember how our pre-frontal cortex is influenced by stress.
- No one can have a logical *problem-solving* oriented talk when they are flooded.
- Take extra time to talk.
- Get space from difficult conversations, rather than continuing to push the issue.
- Check in on levels of rest/tiredness before pursuing important conversations.

### Zones of Regulation

| Color  | Level of Alertness         | Feelings  |
|--------|----------------------------|---|
| Blue   | Low state of alertness     | Bored, tired, sad, disappointed, sick, depressed, shy                 |
| Green  | Perfect state of alertness | Happy, positive, thankful, proud, calm, content, ready to learn       |
| Yellow | Higher state of alertness  | Excited, silly, annoyed, worried, embarrassed, confused, nervous      |
| Red    | Too much alertness         | Upset, angry, aggressive, mad, too excited, terrified, out of control |



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## Working with Anger and Hostility: **SAFE Model** for De-Escalation

Many people are expressing distress about the pandemic in an external way. This often manifests itself as anger. In order to de-escalate yourself and others, the **SAFE model** provides key concepts to keep in mind:

- S: Self
- A: Area Awareness
- F: Feelings
- E: Engagement

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### SAFE: Self

- Tune in to yourself.
- Be aware of your own reactions, the tone of voice you use, your body language, and your choice of words.
- Monitor yourself in order to stay calm and to not take the situation personally, even if the words become personal.
- **Larger non-verbal messages are particularly important, particularly in the case where PPE (face masks) can interfere with people's ability to pick up on nuances of communication.**
- Be aware of the non-verbal things you are 'saying' to the other person. **Posture** and **Position** are important here.

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## SAFE: Area Awareness

- Pay attention to your physical area.
- Notice the space and people around you.
- Your general physical area includes people, exits, (potential) weapons, available help, and other resources.
- **Don't position or keep yourself between an angry person and their exit.**

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## SAFE: Feelings

- Employ active listening techniques to identify what the angry person is feeling underneath the anger.
- **Remember that anger is often related to other emotions like fear or sadness. It is easier for most people to direct emotions outwardly than deal with them internally.**
- By listening for feelings underneath anger, you can identify the cause of the emotions at the center of the issue.
- It is easier to empathize with someone who is angry when you understand what they may be afraid of or worried about.

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## SAFE: Engagement

- If it is safe to do so, connect with the angry person by **engaging** to understand their story. Use active listening.
- Don't dismiss them or their concerns. Identify and **engage resources or other people or information** that may be able to address or help solve their problem or concern in some way.
- **Engage support for yourself** when you are in the position of dealing with an angry person or people.
- Don't keep a hostile interaction to yourself. Share it with others to get the support you need after dealing with a difficult person or situation.
- **Engage your resources (friends, family, social networks)** to increase your resilience.

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## Resilience Development

### Purpose

- What motivates you?
- What contributes to *compassion rewards*?
- What can you remind yourself of to help on a day-to-day basis (**don't think too long term or big picture**).

### Connection

- How can you maintain existing connections with others?
- How can you develop new connections?
- **Connection can be anything that prevents isolation.**

### Flexibility and Adaptability

- How can you be creative in physical distancing while leveraging connection?
- How can you adjust your physical space?
- How can you adapt your schedule to give yourself discreet and clear breaks and boundaries?

### Hope

- What opportunities may exist where they didn't before?
- What are some surprise or hidden benefits that have come out of recent experiences?
- What examples do you have to shift your thinking from a 'threat' to a 'challenge'?

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## Practice the **REST** Model

|   |   |   |  |
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| <p><b>Reward:</b> Reward yourself for a job well done. Build reinforcements into your work. Help pay attention to this aspect for maintaining resilience.</p> | <p><b>Establish:</b> Establish healthy boundaries. When you are off duty, stick to that boundary.</p> | <p><b>Share:</b> Share your feelings, concerns, and stories. Participate in support and consultation groups. Make time for connections and activities in your life.</p> | <p><b>Trust:</b> Trust your support network and reach out as needed. Refer people elsewhere if you are too tired or compromised emotionally to be able to offer support.</p> |
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## Resources

### Training:

- Health Support Team (including train-the-trainer)
- PsySTART-Responder (frontline healthcare only)

### Resources:

- MEDIC, REST, and SAFE models
- [Behavioral Health Group Impact Reference Guide](#)
  - Healthcare and behavioral health providers, outreach teams, post critical care individuals, etc.
  - Unique challenges and considerations
  - Support strategies (organizational, supervisory, and personal)
- Children and families: [Behavioral Health Toolbox for Families: Supporting Children and Teens During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- Emergency and healthcare workers: [Coping During COVID-19 for Emergency and Healthcare Professionals](#)
- Businesses and workers: [COVID-19 Guidance for Building Resilience in the Workplace](#)

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## Resources (cont.)

### Webpages:

DOH – Forecasts, situation reports, guidance, and other resources:

- [Behavioral Health Resources Webpage](#)

State – General mental health resources and infographics:

- [Mental and Emotional Well-being Resources](#)
- [Infographic Library](#)

Looking for support?  
Call Washington Listens at  
1-833-681-0211



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