

SELAH - PAUSE AND REFLECT



Covid – 19 And A Therapist’s Life

According to the survey conducted by Suicide Prevention India Foundation (June, 2020), more than 62% of therapists are experiencing varying levels of caregiver fatigue - a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by taking care of others at the expense of personal wellbeing. While it is a common phenomenon in mental health care settings, it is greatly exacerbated by the global COVID - 19 pandemic, where therapists have had to take online counseling sessions even though therapy is essentially an in-person practice. We need to commend the resilience that all the mental health practitioners have shown in such difficult times while going through similar issues themselves during the pandemic.

All mental health service providers are witnessing exacerbation of symptoms in present clients and a great influx of new clients due to the inherent uncertainty of the times we are living in. We, as therapists are feeling out of touch and exhausted due to the unexpected online transition of work. Most of us were not prepared with good internet connections, suitable work from home conditions, or emotional bandwidth to make such big changes at short notices.

Celebrating Survival

There will be no edges,
but curves.
Clean lines pointing only
forward.
History, with its hard spine &
dog-eared
Corners, will be replaced with
nuance,

Just like the dinosaurs gave
way
To mounds and mounds of ice.

“Sci-Fi” by Tracy K. Smith



Taking sessions with only a limited view of the client, zoom fatigue and various other distractions has been deeply challenging, even though we try our best to be mindful of our annoyances. Professionals are also feeling the burnout with a constant state of worry not just about their lifestyle change, but also, for their clients who can't access their support circles or institutions that were previously easily accessible.

Despite all limitations and challenges, teams of professionals are trying their best to create remedial solutions and adapt themselves to face the pandemic with their clients more prepared.

We are immensely grateful to all our clients for being patient with us, and to our peers for being so supportive. Therapists are also humans, and there may be days that they need to step away from their professional roles, to ground themselves, and start again. All we look for is compassion in each other and so far, we have received the same. Amidst all the chaos, turmoil, and uncertainty, the mental health community is still flourishing and growing stronger.

SELF-CARE TIP:

Be mindful of your relationship with technology and social media consumption. While it offers a medium to stay connected with people, its unchecked use may have detrimental effects on mental health. For news, refer to reliable and trusted sources of information. It may be helpful to set daily limits, and include some physical activities in everyday routine.



-Risha Bhattacharya



Candid Corner

With Omar Bazza - Omar is a clinical therapist in Toronto, Canada. He works full-time in a government-funded mental health agency and runs a Twitter page dedicated to mental health and a youtube channel.

Room: *What was your experience during the pandemic?*

Omar: Yes it has been very tough. I have worked a lot more because there is a big mental health crisis. I didn't think it would ever get this hard but it did and it didn't take long to get bad.

Room: *How did you personally cope with it?*

Omar: A lot of self-care, talking with friends, colleagues, family, having my pets around. This is what helped me get through it the most. Seeing results and people improving can be a great motivator as well that helps me keep going.

Room: *What did you leave behind and what did you pick as a new change during the pandemic?*

Omar: I left behind my social life. I used to love going to restaurants with people and trying new things in the city. But I am an introvert, so leaving that behind hasn't been difficult. I picked up a lot of DIY skills and fixing things at home myself, as well as gardening. They are so pleasant to do and it feels like I am achieving something when I am done working. It is very therapeutic.

Room: *You're raw when you talk about your experiences on Twitter. Did that change anything from before you were here?*

Omar: I think I was always honest and raw when talking about experiences because sometimes, that's what it takes for people to pay attention. I don't like sanitized conversations on topics like mental health because we can leave out a lot of important details.

Room: *Considering we're going to go back and forth with work-from-home for a while, would you like to give one tip/takeaway to the readers?*

Omar: It is good to have a different area for work and leisure. Our brains operate a lot on habit. So by keeping them separate, our brains will know when it is time to work or rest. Also not neglecting your self-care and breaks. It can be easy to just work all the time because we are doing it from home. But we need that balance

Room: *With this mental health crisis, mental health service providers are tirelessly working as well. What's one tip you'd like to give them?*

Omar: It can be easy to feel like we need to step up and do more than we can until this mental health crisis is more under control. But we risk burning ourselves out quickly. It is important to take breaks and days off when we can.

Monthly Takeaway

"Blueprints for the future are a fool's errand. They're like blueprints for a house – nice to have but any foreman with half a brain doesn't need to look at them." – Ron Swanson, Parks & Recreation (S06E18)

