



COMMUNITY
HEALTH CARE
ASSOCIATION
of New York State

Community Care Corner

Health Center Staff Wellness Resources

Trauma-Informed Toolbox Strategy Session: Navigating Fear and Worry in the Workplace

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“

Take the first step in faith.
You don't have to see the whole staircase;
just take the first step.

”

(Martin Luther King Jr.)



All of Our Realities

Experiencing the reality of the dual pandemics...

- Continuous news and social media reports
- Violence, brutality, racial injustice
- Increased numbers of COVID-19 cases
- Ongoing and rapid changes in protocols, directives, etc.
- Uncertainty about the future



What is Worry?

Verb

- Give way to **anxiety or unease**; allow one's mind to dwell on **difficulty or troubles**.

Noun

- A state of **anxiety and uncertainty** over actual or potential problems.

Short-term worry is a normal and healthy response. However, chronic worry can trigger short and long-term fear/stress responses.

(Brosschot, 2017; Holland, 2018; Oxford, 2020)

Fear Response

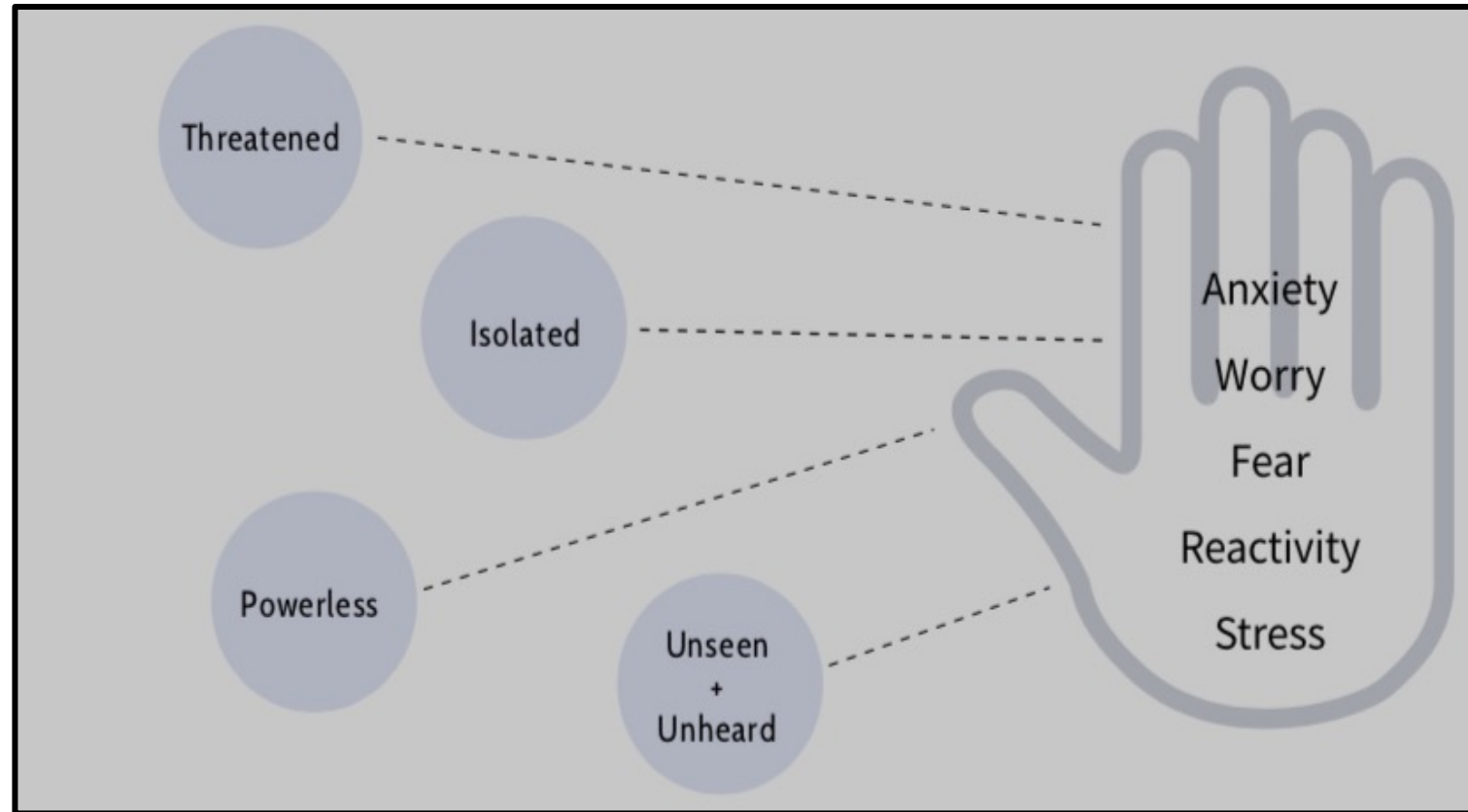
When we perceive something as a threat, the amygdala activates and generates a fear response—commonly referred to as the “**fight, flight, or freeze**” or stress response.



[YouTube: The Fight, Flight, Freeze Response](#)

(Burke-Harris, 2014; Klinic, 2013; Pessoa, 2011)

Re-Traumatization & Current Reality



(Jennings, n.d.; ITTIC, 2020)

Self, colleagues, patients,
families, health center, community...

What are you noticing?



(Perry, 2020)

Managing Worry and Fear

Health & Wellness

- Get plenty of sleep
- Eat well-balanced meals
- Limit alcohol and stimulants
- Loosen up your muscles

Research indicates that our thoughts, feelings, and health behaviors are closely linked. One of the things that is within our control is deciding to care for our health and wellbeing.



Physical Activity

- Walking
- Structured exercise classes
- Playing a sport
- Anything that moves you!

Research shows that physical activity reduces the stress response by increasing endorphins, decreasing stress hormones, as well as improving calmness and sleep.



(Nunez, 2020)

Managing Worry and Fear

Relaxation Techniques

- Deep breathing
- Mindfulness – the ability to know what is happening in your head at any given moment without getting carried away by it
- Meditation – a mental exercise that trains attention and awareness

Research has shown meditation and mindfulness can help reduce stress, anxiety, help reduce false fight-flight-freeze responses, and improve sleep.



(Harris, 2015; Nunez, 2020; Thorpe & Link, 2020)



Trauma-Informed Considerations for Worry & Fear

- What could increase yours and others' feelings of **safety**? Connection with others is a means of promoting emotional safety.
- Set up a routine for yourself that includes connecting with others and stick to it. Consistency promotes **trustworthiness** which can also increase feelings of being anchored and grounded.
- With many things out of our control at this time; what do you still have control over? What **choices** do you still have? What choices can you remind others that they have?
- How can you **collaborate** with those you work with to respond in TI ways?
- How can access **empowerment** in yourself and in others by noticing what is working and going-well? What we focus on gets bigger!



Safety



Trustworthiness



Choice



Collaboration



Empowerment

Values/Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach: Responding to Worry and Fear



Safety

- Check-in with a co-worker
- Provide opportunity for support/debriefing
- Make a change to the physical space



Collaboration

- Seek ideas from others
- Complete tasks together
- Provide formal opportunity for feedback



Trustworthiness

- Let others know what to expect
- Provide clear information
- Use reflective listening strategies



Empowerment

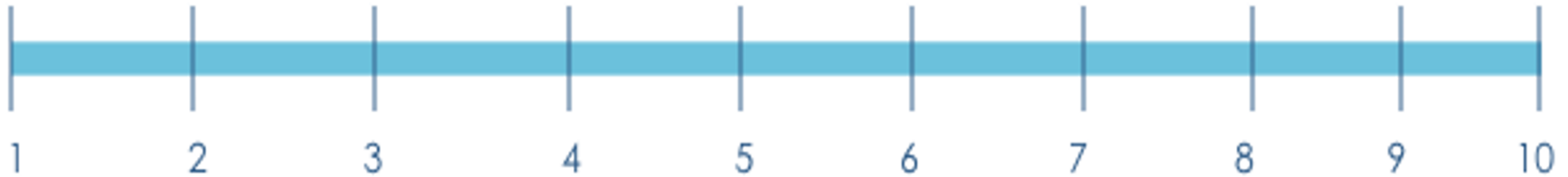
- Recognize strengths & capacity
- Acknowledge what's working
- Build a realistic sense of hope



Choice

- Give even small options where possible
- Inform others of choices available
- Prioritize priorities of others

How well are you navigating worry and fear?



1 = not well

5 = half-way there

10 = very well

What will it take to get just one point higher on the scale?



Additional Resources on Worry & Fear

- CDC – [Coping with Stress](#)
- Chopra – [The Side Effects of Worrying and What to Do Instead](#)
- Cigna – [Coping with the Impact of Racial Injustice](#)
- Declutter the Mind (video) – [5-Minute Guided Meditation for Mindfulness](#)
- Happify (video) – [Why Mindfulness is a Superpower](#)
- Harvard University Health Services – [Managing Fears and Anxiety Around the Coronavirus](#)
- Help Guide - [Coronavirus Anxiety: Coping with Stress, Fear, and Worry](#)
- Help Guide – [How To Stop Worrying](#)
- National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health – [Meditation: In Depth](#)
- NYS Office of Mental Health - [Managing Anxiety in an Anxiety-Provoking Situation](#)

