

How do we Heal After the Collective Trauma of COVID-19?

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It's been over a year since the COVID-19 pandemic affected our lives. With so much change that happened so quickly; cities and countries shutting down, many jobs were lost, school's closed and the many lives lost from an unfamiliar illness. We've had to adapt to a new way of living. Working and going to school remotely, physical distancing, wearing masks and not being able to spend time with the people we care about. It has been a tough year and we are still living in a pandemic. As mass vaccination clinics have become more accessible, there is hope for our lives to go back to *normal*. However, what will *normal* look like after living through a year of so much change and trauma? And how do we heal from the collective trauma we've all faced?

What is Collective Trauma?

Collective trauma is the psychological reactions shared among a group of people who share the same traumatic experience or event. It can be caused by mass shootings, war, natural disasters, genocides and pandemics. Some examples include the great depression in the 1930s, World war II, 9/11 attacks, the great recession and currently the COVID-19 pandemic. Collective trauma can have long lasting societal impacts such as increased fear on an individual and collective level, damaged national pride, humiliation, identity crisis, increased vulnerability and heightened vigilance for new threats. These traumatic events can impact future generations.

Covid-19 and Collective Trauma

The Covid-19 pandemic had contributed to both individual and collective trauma. There has been a number of negative psychological effects since the pandemic that have increased such as fear, depression, irritability, confusion, anger, and PTSD. The uncertainty and isolation of quarantine has left people feeling like they are unable to have control of the situation or engage in their regular routines. These effects not only affect adults, but children as well.

Managing and Healing from Collective Trauma

Here are some steps you can take to heal from collective trauma:

- Limiting media exposure
 - Setting a limit on the amount of time from media you are exposed to through television or social media
 - Rely on trustworthy information, viewing the sources or references from news or online articles.
- Establish routines and practice self-care
 - Getting plenty of sleep, eating regular meals, staying active, using planners for personal, work or school.
 - Engage in activities you enjoy (art, cooking, going for walks, practice yoga, mindfulness, etc)
- Stay connected with others
 - Find creative ways to communicate with important people in your life when face-to-face contact is limited
- Utilize mental health resources
 - Attend therapy whether in person or online via telehealth
 - Find a support group or create one with peers and colleagues
 - Speak with your insurance or doctor of any mental health referrals.
 - Contact a crisis hotline available 24/7:
 - Stanislaus County Community Service Response Team: 209-558-4600
 - National Suicide and Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
 - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline: 1-800-662-4357

Sources:

<https://www.verywellmind.com/protect-your-mental-health-during-quarantine-4799766>
<https://www.verywellmind.com/collective-trauma-from-covid-19-4844357>