

Living in a Pandemic

Our first instincts as humans when faced with crisis or threat is to turn to other humans, to seek solace, to seek connection, to try to stay safe and to try to make sense of what is happening. However, in this Pandemic we are being told: To stay away! That crowds are dangerous! Even people are dangerous! Do not go see your elderly mum or grandma, as we could dangerous!

For nearly a year, we have been asking: Is it going to be okay? When will this end?

Trauma is about feelings of hopelessness, powerlessness, a sense of not belonging and not being in control. Does this sound familiar? Trauma is about unresolved suffering and I would argue that this pandemic is just that! Unresolved loss, isolation and disarray. If we are unable to huddle together, unable to seek human connection; we experience disconnection, dysregulation, disintegration and remote feeling of loneliness.

How do we respond to suffering? Compassion is key! We need to come along aside each emotionally, united; to see each other and to hear each other. We have seen unending demonstrations of togetherness and unity, such as the: clap for carers, 'the blessing' church choir and acts of kindness to strangers (getting essentials, forming groups of support, check-in calls).

Showing us we do belong, we can get through this and that we are not alone!

Survival, Anger and Denial

We are being told to isolate to keep us safe, but our bodies do not understand this, they are warning us that we are in an emergency, that being alone is not safe. But we are having to consciously and sub-consciously override this in an attempt to abide by the restrictions. Being alone was never how it was meant to be, we are social beings!

Isolation is biologically dysregulating.

Responses to being in a crisis are instinctive, we have no respite from the pandemic and some people at the moment feel stuck and fed up. You may have heard of the Flight, Fight and Freeze response, these are and can be applied to our reactions to the pandemic:

- **Flight** – attempt to 'flee' the situation, to avoid what is happening, this could be through watching endless films or series.
- **Fight** – frustration, agitation or anger, a need for a scapegoat, who is to blame!
- **Freeze** – feelings of denial, avoidance of what is happening, feeling numb or distant.

Let's not shame ourselves or be critical about ours or other ways of coping. Beating ourselves up only triggers our reactions more. Our brains aren't faulty, they are trying to keep us safe. These are our best attempts to survive under extreme circumstances, remember we may not be in the Same Boat, but we are in the Same Storm.