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PHASE IV IN THE NEW NORMAL RECOIL, RECOVERY and RESILIENCY FROM the COVID-19

As we, hopefully, enter the Recovery Phase of the Pandemic there will be considerations and challenges. Some of the challenges we will face immediately, others may develop over time. The Recovery Phase will be met with a combination of urgency, anticipation and apprehension. There will be a lot of questions raised to include:

- Can we really return to normality?
- If we cannot return to normality, what will the future be like?
- Can our agency/department make the transition?
- Can my family adapt to the transition?
- Can I adapt to the transition?
- What will I be losing with the change?
- How do I adapt?
- What if I cannot adapt?
- What if the peak is one peak of many mountains or the plateau is a very long plateau before it descends?
- What if COVID-19 returns?
- Can I handle the Pandemic again?

At some level we all realize that life will be different, like it or not. Using 9/11, as an example, our life changed. In order to increase safety and security at that time, three things needed to occur; additional money had to be spent; inconveniences were put into place and civil liberties were modified. The example of this premise was seen in air travel after 9/11. We eventually accepted, like it or not, that we could never go back to the way we were before. The COVID-19 Pandemic is similar in that in order to minimize the re-occurrence of the virus, there must be changes and inconveniences. This document is developed to provide some issues and considerations that can be helpful in navigating the recovery. At this time Resiliency becomes an important coping skill. There are many interpretations and definitions of Resiliency. However, for this document, Resiliency is defined as being able to adapt quickly to the current circumstances. There are certain considerations that will cross over to all areas of our life. The two main considerations that will affect all areas of our life involve the utilization of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Social Distancing. The specific areas to be discussed in this document are:

- a) **Personal Preparation**---what you personally need to modify in order to effectively function within the changes in your environment. You will need to develop these new coping techniques for both the short term and potentially for the 'Long Haul'.
- b) **Family Preparation**---what you and your family need to consider and modify in order to adapt to the potentially New Normal.



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- c) **Agency/Department Preparation**---what your agency/department needs to consider and modify. What will the new 'Rules of Engagement' look like?

Personal Preparation-This is the domain where you can either create your own brand of misery or embrace the reality and adapt to it. Personal Preparation challenges our ability to be or become Resilient. Attitude is always highlighted as the major factor in adaptation, recovery, resiliency and growth. However, the concept of Attitude is never really defined or attached to specific behaviors. For the purpose of this section, Attitude will be related to our perception, thoughts and self-talk. Internal words become very important in adaptation and resiliency. Statements such as:

- Yes, but or well yes but....
- This is a bunch of bull sh..
- Why do I even have to do this...
- I can't handle this...
- This is not going to work...

only serve to interfere with resiliency and coping. The following bullet points are provided to assist with adaptation, coping and resiliency. These options should be combined with your normal coping skills.

- Develop a list of your pre COVID-19 Pandemic activities, recreations, exercise routines, socialization activities and relaxation actions.
- Analyze each of your pre-Pandemic actions to the post Pandemic New Normal requirement. If there is no change between Normal and New Normal resume those activities.
- If there is a change between Normal and New Normal develop contingency plans for resuming those activities.
- If the activities cannot be resumed because of the New Normal and there does not seem to be a way to engage in substitute action you must then identify what needs were being met by that activity. The next step would be to develop an alternative and acceptable way to meet those needs.
- Watch your language, in terms of self-talk and what feelings your words create.
- Create routines and follow them.
- Give yourself time to mourn the loss from the New Normal, but don't obsess too long.
- Develop and maintain a Self-Care regiment.
- Monitor your stress or psychological problems. An easy metric for evaluation involves 4 key areas: **frequency** of the symptoms, **duration** of the symptoms, **severity** of the symptoms and **interference** of the symptoms with your daily life.
- Don't allow your Comfort Zone (things you enjoy or like doing) to shrink. On a regular basis try to push the edge your Comfort Zone.
- Stat connected to family and friends.



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- Develop a mitigation plan for the disruptions or problems involved in the New Normal.
 - Conduct regular personal audits to evaluate your adaptation to the New Normal.
 - Implementation of the changes as well as development of a long-term monitoring and contingency plan becomes the next step in the process.
- **Family Preparation-**The Psychological Footprint of the Recovery will impact not just you, but all your household members as well as the extended family. What affects one family member can potentially impact all family members. For a period during the recovery phase, your focus will be on Problem Resolution and General Maintenance. Achieving a state of serenity, freedom from stress and harmony may take a while longer. It is important not to create more stress or over-react to actions from family members. It is important to remember that the Pandemic, sheltering in place, remote learning and recovery will also be impacting your children. If your children are younger the only way they may be able to express their feelings is through their behaviors instead of their words. Avoid the tendency to slip down that ‘Rabbit Hole’ by focusing too much time and energy on a specific problem or argument. Now it will be important to ‘Pick your battles. Pick the battles that are big enough to be meaningful yet small enough to resolve.
 - **Spouse/Partner/Significant Other Issues**
 - Consider the functioning of your family as having to operate under a New Normal.
 - Formally address and develop ‘Rules of Engagement’ regarding interactions with your partner as well as with the entire family.
 - Develop and follow daily routines.
 - Balancing your needs with your partner’s needs.
 - Compromise whenever possible and minimize forcing your opinions or desires.
 - Make stress reduction and self-care a priority for both of you and make sure you model this behavior.
 - If possible, create a safe/relaxing space in your house that is not contaminated with work or arguments.
 - Realize and identify your togetherness tolerances. All relationships have a minimum and a maximum amount of time they can be around each other. Discuss these time frames and if you are reaching your togetherness capacity give each other permission to take a time out.
 - Develop and utilize a ‘date time’, even if you can’t leave the house.
 - Take turns overseeing such things as meals, house activities, fun activities, etc.
 - When arguing, keep the interaction future focused. Focus on statements such as “what do we need to do to resolve this problem” as opposed to “you” statements.



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- Remember the goal of an argument is to resolve the issue not WIN.
 - Give yourselves permission to utilize other resources such as your EAP or psychological services when you tried but cannot seem to resolve an issue.
 - If possible, avoid unilateral decision making regarding major family decisions.
- **Children/Adolescent Issues**
 - Remember what affects you may also affect your children.
 - Children on one hand may want to get back to normality as quickly as possible, but on the other hand have apprehensions.
 - When discussing with your children about either returning to the old normal or having to adapt to the new normal make sure your responses are age appropriate for your children.
 - If possible, when your children cannot return to an old activity, try to allow them to be 'Investors' as opposed to 'Consumers' in the process. Let them have a say or decision in the New Normal, within limits.
 - If the New Normal requires a new skill set for you children such as remote learning, make sure you assist them with acquiring the skills and having the appropriate tools.
 - If the Shelter in Place mandate has caused your children to miss something important like 6th grade continuation, prom, high school, or college graduation, help them come up with an alternative way to celebrate. It is important that the new option be something they developed not something you, as a parent, decided.
 - Adolescents who are or will be applying to Colleges may find this time especially stressful. They may be worried about their grades or their chances to obtain athletic scholarships. It will be important for the adolescents and the parents to obtain as much information as possible about both the application process as well as the athletic recruitment process. This would be a good time for parents to use a Bumper Sticker statement such as "All the other applicants are going through the same challenges as you are".
 - As parents, make sure you are modeling self-care.
 - If problems become too frequent or too intense, take advantage of your Agency or Department's psychological services
 - **Elderly or Vulnerable Family Member Issues**
 - Interacting with elderly or vulnerable family members will require a balance between wanting to connect or re-connect vs. keeping your family member safe from the virus.
 - Ask those family what type of interaction they would with you and your children.



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- If your family member is unsure or making risky choices, you may have to become their outboard brain and make the decisions for them.
 - If the family member is struggling with certain issues or responsibilities, at that point in time you can become their outboard brain and provide them with solutions or problem-solving options.
 - Provide the family member resources as well as options to utilize their insurance for psychological services or their EAP
- **Agency/Department Preparation**-Preparing for the Recovery will present challenges for both leadership as well as employees. There are several areas which must be navigated to include Government Mandates regarding service delivery, Agency/Department requirements for service delivery, Culture and Climate Considerations and Employee Satisfaction and Morale. Meeting any one of those requirements may cause problems in another area. Therefore, anticipating unintended consequences and balancing actions become a critical skill. This section will focus on providing specific considerations and techniques in two areas: Leadership and Employees. It is important to keep in mind that the Recovery Phase will be stressful for both leadership and employees even though it is the phase everyone was looking forward to occurring. Leadership needs to accept that the early phases of Recovery will be spent dealing both with problems as well as providing Business as Usual.
 - **Leadership Issues**
 - The first issue in this category is determining what aspects of running the agency/department must be changed according to mandated guidelines
 - The second issue would be determining what aspects of doing the job are not mandated to be changed but could benefit from a modification.
 - The next step involves determining the new service delivery options as well as determining the unintended consequences for activating the change.
 - Developing a mitigation plan for the disruptions or problems involved in the changes is next.
 - In the Recovery Phase it will be important for leadership at all levels to be visible and available.
 - Leadership should respond with a unified voice and information should be provided in a written form on a regular basis.
 - Rumors should be responded to and dealt with in a timely manner
 - Leadership should provide a Real Time Question and Answer modality.
 - Leadership should allow and encourage employee suggestions and recommendations.
 - The next challenge involves communicating to the employees the changes and trying to develop their acceptance.



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- When leadership makes decisions on what to return to normal and what not to return to normal, it is important to provide the recipients with scientific or logical reasons for the decisions.
- When possible, provide employees or recipients with time lines for either returning to normal or implementation of the New Normal
- Implementation of the changes as well as development of a long-term monitoring and contingency plan becomes the next step in the process.
- It is also recommended that Leadership have a rapid response program in the event of a reoccurrence of the Coronavirus.
- **Employee Issues**
 - Employees need to be prepared for the Recovery Phase to simultaneously create both anticipation and anxiety. Accept those reactions as normal, even if they are somewhat stress inducing.
 - Adaptation becomes an important skill. Separate out New Normal changes that you don't like or cannot adapt to from New Normal changes that you can adapt to. For the changes that you cannot adapt to, you must decide if you have control over changing them. If you do then pursue that option, if not, you must adapt and control your reactions or make a career decision.
 - If the New Normal has caused you to lose a portion of your job that was enjoyable or fulfilling, you should try to find a new direction that can either be enjoyable or fulfilling.
 - If the New Normal has taken away your 'Identity', try to either develop a new 'Identity' or meet that need in a different way.
 - If all options appear to not be effective, take advantage of your Agency/Department resources.