

Coping in Today's World: Managing Isolation and Worry



Wren Hudgins, PhD

- Psychologist since 1981 in Washington
- Worked as a school psychologist (4 yrs)
- Private practice with two psychiatrist partners in Renton for 20 years
- Managed Critical Incident Response program for WA State Parks for 8 years
- 20 year Disaster Mental Health responder and instructor for the American Red Cross
- Also working now for King County Public Health and Dept. of Health, State of WA

Welcome



Introductions



Camera



Microphone



Chat

Class Purpose

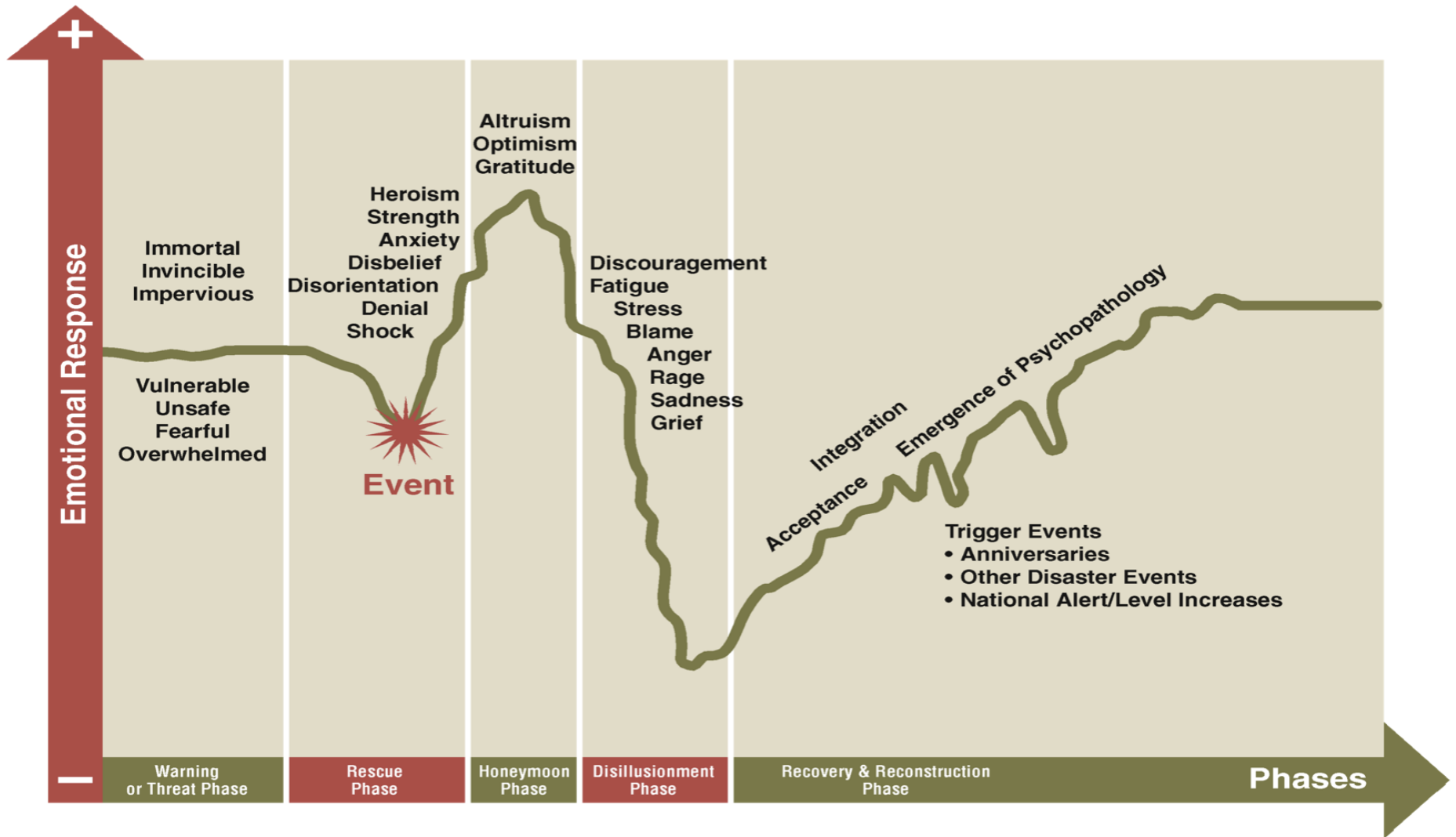


Learn to recognize signs of stress



Learn to strengthen your resiliency

Disaster Response Phases



Myers and Zunin, 1990; DHHS, 2000 & 2004; Herrmann, 2004

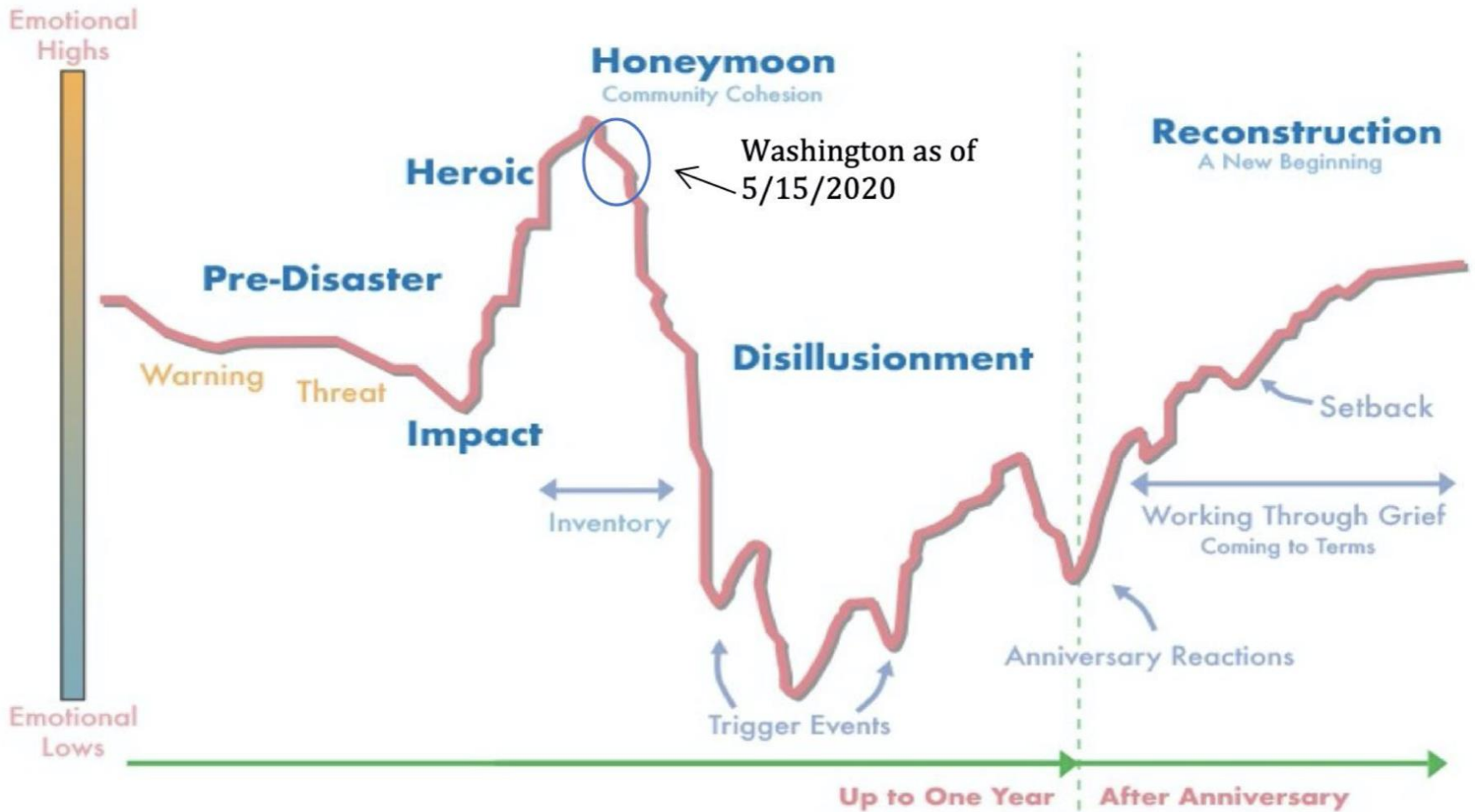


Figure 1. Reactions and Behavioral Symptoms in Disasters: SAMHSA

<https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/recovering-disasters/phases-disaster>

Reactions and Behavioral Health Symptoms in Disasters

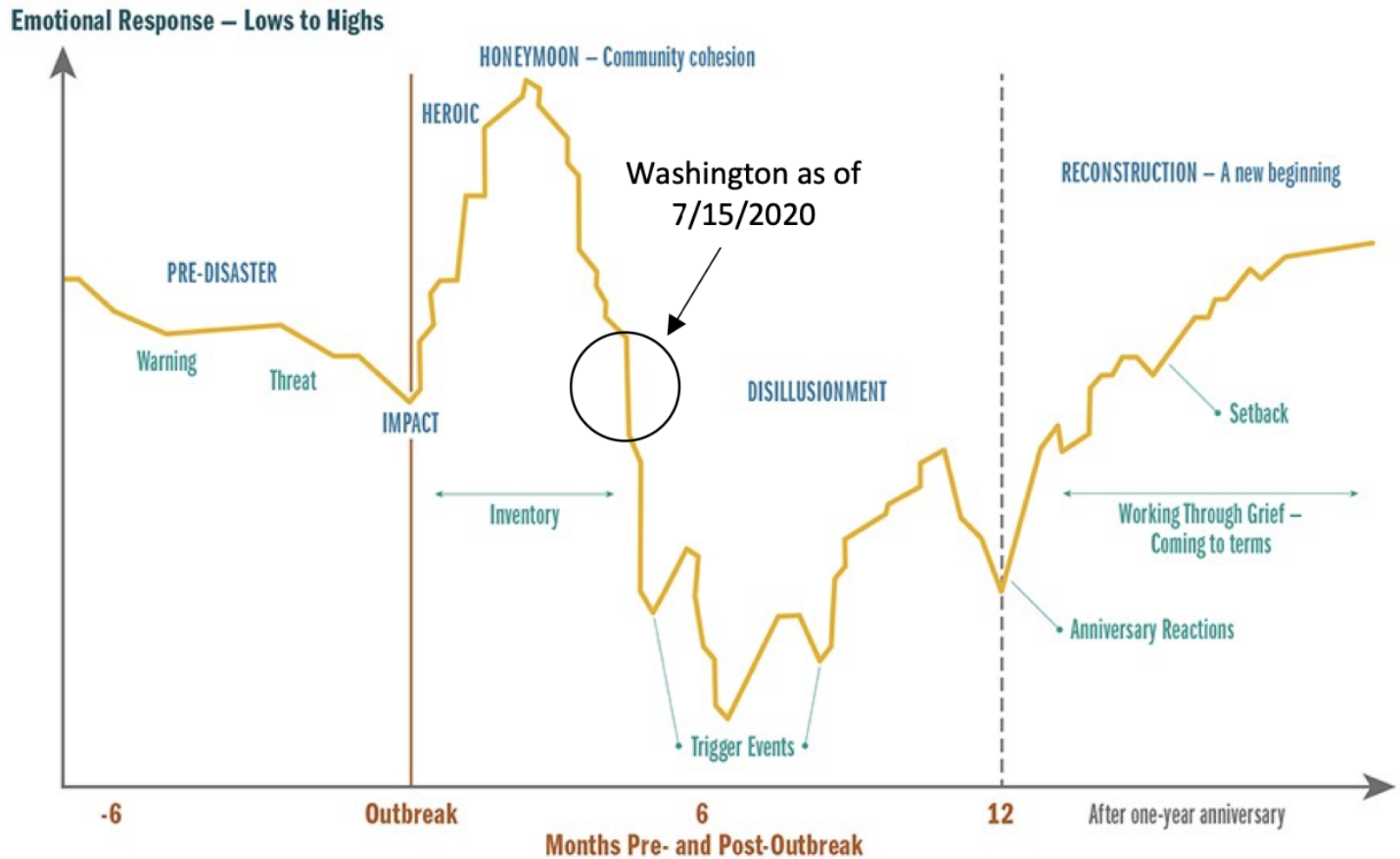


Figure 1: Phases of reactions and behavioral health symptoms in disasters.
Adapted from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) ⁴

Reactions and Behavioral Health Symptoms in Disasters

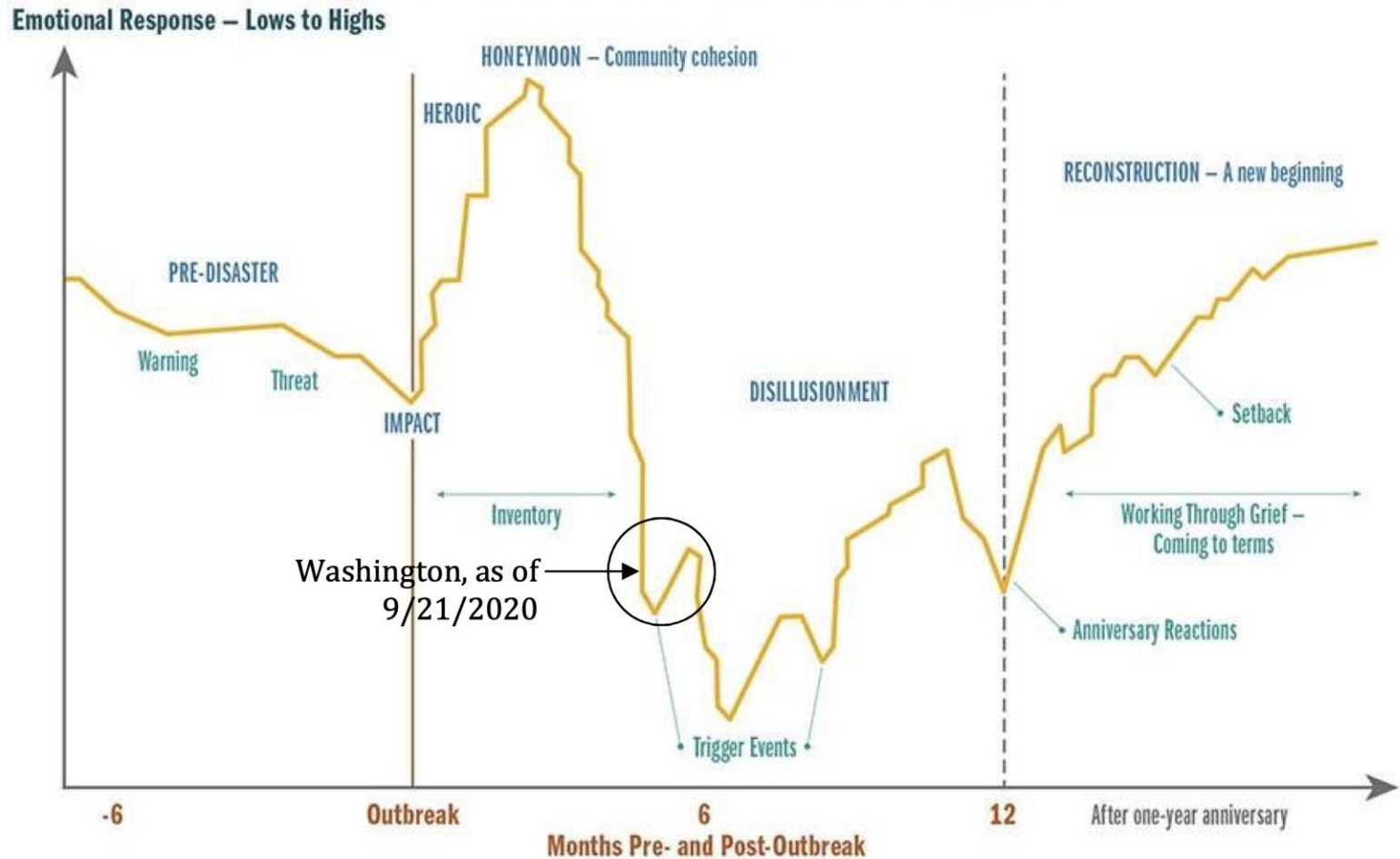
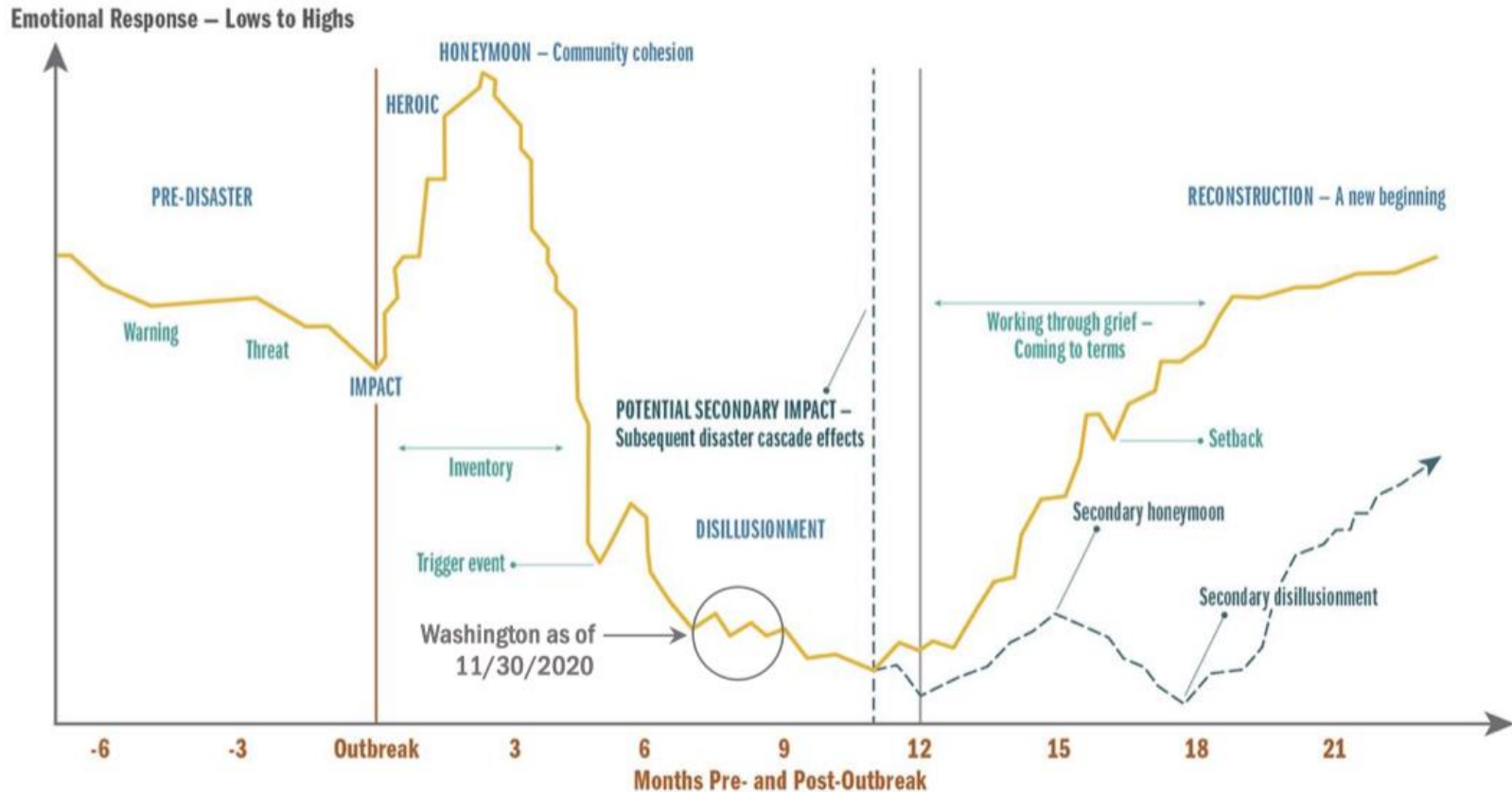


Figure 1: Phases of reactions and behavioral health symptoms in disasters. Adapted from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)⁷

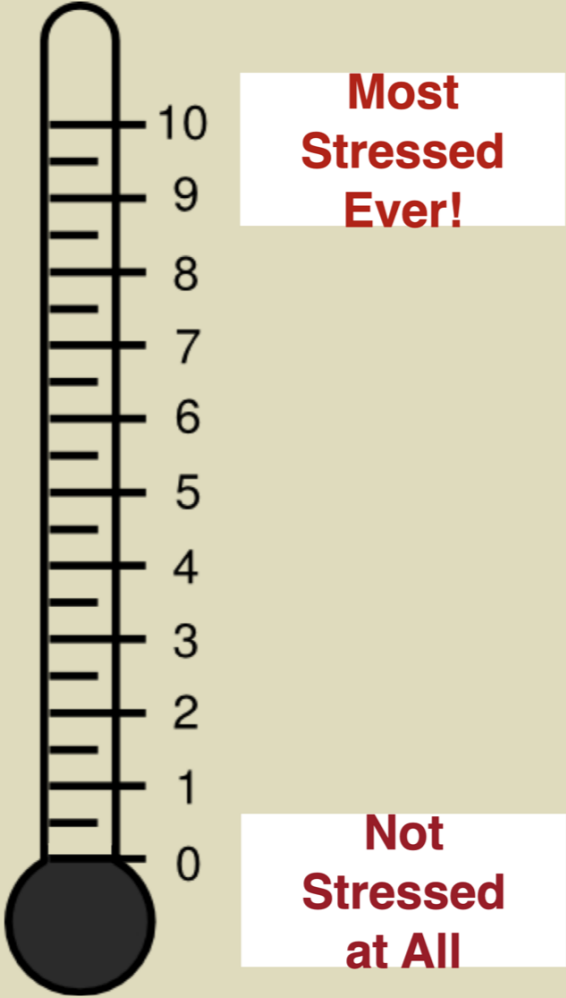
Reactions and Behavioral Health Symptoms in Disasters



**Figure 1: Phases of reactions and behavioral health symptoms in disasters. Adapted from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)⁸*

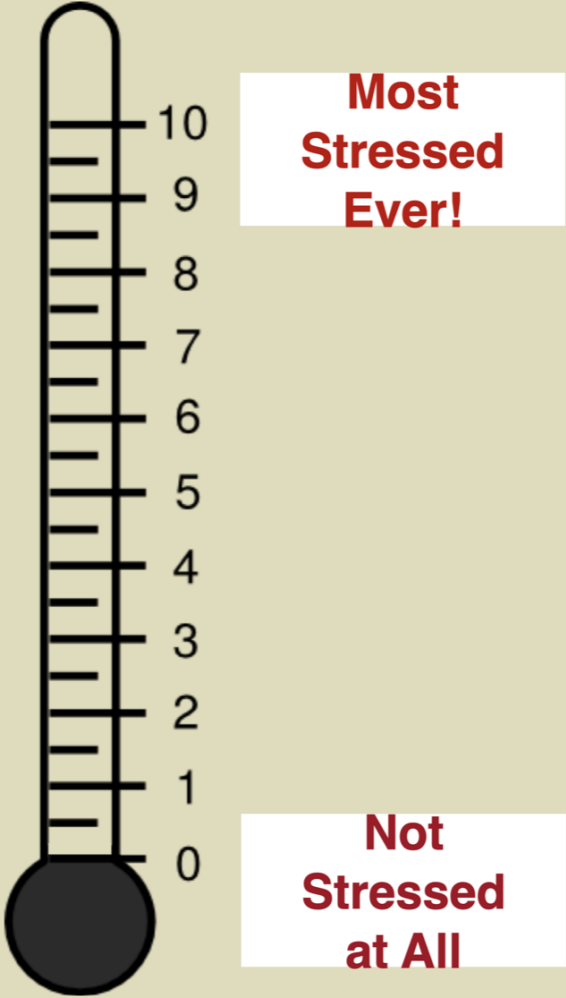
**The dotted graph line represents the response and recovery pattern that may occur if the current infection rate trend continues upwards and triggers a disaster cascade.*

How Stressed Am I?



Breathing Exercise

How Stressed Am I?



"The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet. This sort of denial is no small matter. The way we deal with loss shapes our capacity to be present to life more than anything else."

-Rachel Naomi Remen

QUESTIONS TO GET US STARTED



What do you see as the most significant stressor for you currently?



How does your current level of stress compare with stressors in the past?



What are your internal signals that tell you that you are overstressed?

Stress



· Stress is a common and expected part of our lives.



· When challenging, difficult or even dangerous situations arise, **stress can motivate us to act.**



· When stress is extreme, or prolonged, people often have stress reactions.

Wren Hudgins, PhD
Supervisor, American Red Cross
Northwest Region
1900 25th Ave. S.
Seattle, WA 98144



Sources of Stress in a COVID 19 World

- Concerns about infection risk, severity of symptoms, availability of PPE, testing
- Knowledge that there is no cure and there is no vaccine
- The unknown. There is much we don't know still - immunity, mutations, etc
- Worries about loss of employment and income; ability to care for family
- Concerns about scarcity and the inability to obtain essential items
- Concerns about putting yourself and others at risk through essential actions such as going to the grocery store or caregiving
- Concerns related to the disruption of normal routines
- Worries related to safety measures - Are they really safe? Many don't follow.
- Worries about the effects on children, loved ones, family
- Vicarious or secondary stress - just knowing there is so much suffering
- Many sources offer information and guidelines that don't agree with other sources
- Uncertain path forward. When is it really safe to do what?
- Uncertain duration. How long will this last? Will there be second and third waves?

Individual Stress Reactions



· Feelings



· Thoughts



· Behaviors



· Physical Conditions



· Spiritual Life

Signs of Stress

Thinking

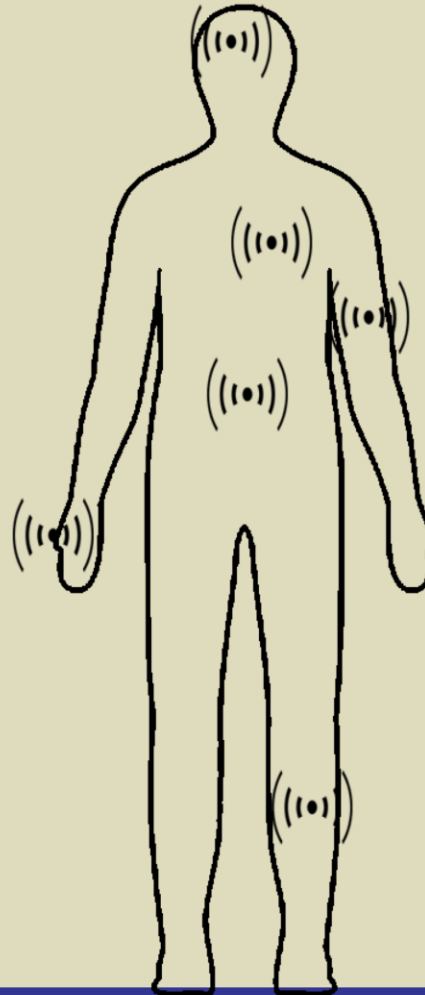
- Difficulty concentrating
- Poor memory
- Increased worry
- Preoccupation about getting sick or displaying symptoms
- Focusing on the negative

Emotions

- Anger
- Agitation
- Moodiness
- Depression
- Irritability

Behaviors

- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Starting arguments
- Changes in sleep
- Changes in appetite
- Clenching jaw/teeth grinding
- Substance use



Spirituality

- Loss of purpose
- Questioning the meaning of life
- Loss of faith
- Questioning belief system

Relationships

- Reduced intimacy
- Increased conflicts and fighting
- Impatience
- Feeling Isolated or disconnected

Physical

- Headaches
- Stomach pain
- Tense muscles
- Digestive issues
- Fatigue

Work

- Decreased motivation
- Task avoidance
- Low morale
- Frustration
- Adjusting to new work schedule or setting



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Stress will show up differently in everyone - that's normal.

It's important to know how it shows up for you.

Stress Continuum



**Alert Status:
Take Precautions**

Stress affected

Injury



Low

Caution

High

What has been the most helpful strategy for managing stress for you in the past?



Ideas

- Computer search "stress management"
- "Here and Now" exercises
- Practice gratitude
- Practice kindness
- Exercise
- Plan time to relax - bubble bath, music, etc.
- If worried, identify what you can control
- Make a plan to address that part
- Media diet

Sample Mindfulness Exercise



Think of five things you can see right now.

Pause to do that.

Think of four things you can touch & feel right now.

Pause to do that.

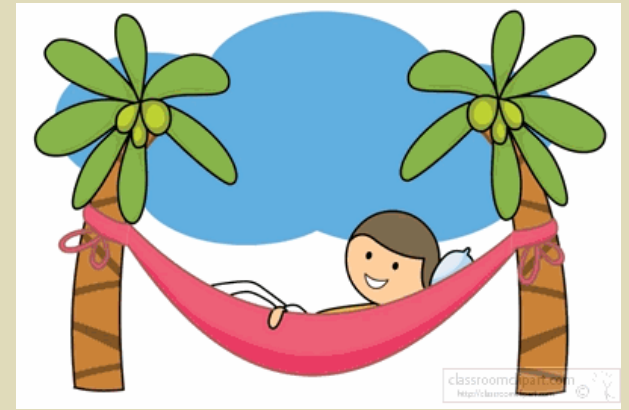
Think of three things you can hear right now.

Pause to do that.

Think of two things you can smell right now.

Pause to do that. Take a deep breath.

Controlling Thinking



Notice what you are thinking about right now.
Is this what you want to be focusing on?
If not, decide what you want to focus on.
Focus on that.
Repeat this process periodically.
No self criticism allowed.
Everyone has a wandering mind.



Dealing with Difficult People

- Internally
 - be fully attentive
 - be mindful of your tone of voice
 - be mindful of your body language
 - know where the exits are (don't block)
 - know that beneath anger is usually fear

Dealing with difficult people - 2

- Externally
 - Listen actively
 - Be warm, but set limits and maintain boundaries
 - If someone is overly emotional, acknowledge the emotion, but move them toward action
 - Validate the person, not the complaint
 - Avoid anger, instead acknowledges strengths

Grief: What is it?

A natural response to loss.

Emotional suffering when something or some one you love has been taken away.

The pain of grief can also disrupt your physical health, making it difficult to sleep, eat or even think straight.

The more significant the loss, the more intense your reactions may be.

Yes there are stages, but this is a personal journey w/o a timetable.

Grief: How to Manage it

Acknowledge your pain

Accept that grief can trigger unexpected emotions

Know that the grieving process will be unique to you

Seek social support from those who care about you

Take care of yourself physically

Be patient but expect a roller coaster

Psychological Resilience

Psychological resilience is the ability to effectively “bounce back” from stressful situations, including crises and disasters.

- **DOES EVERYONE HAVE RESILIENCE?**

About Resilience



Resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary



Being resilient does not mean you do not experience distress or never need help



It involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned



Think of building resilience as a personal journey

BUILDING RESILIENCE



We will consider 10 ways to build resilience.



Think about which building blocks are already part of your resiliency tool kit.



What can you add to the list from your own knowledge and experience

Knowing something is good for you is different from doing it.

To learn to cope better, you have to change how you think about some things and also change some behavior.

As we go through this material, take notes on what you want to do differently.

#1 - Make connections with others



- Having caring and supportive relationships is the primary factor in resilience
- With COVID, the loss of connection to others is a major stressor for many of us

Connecting

Look	Look for ways to re-connect and establish new sources of social support:
Call	Call old friends
Connect	Connect with faith and cultural community groups
Join	Join a book club, or create a new interest group

#2 - Avoid seeing crises as impossible problems



You can change how you interpret and respond to events



Focus on what you can control



Remember a success you had in overcoming a tough problem



Think of one thing you can do to move in the direction you want

Example: Your family has traveled from out of town to come visit you. However, the residential facility rules don't allow in-person visits.

What you can't control: the rules

What you can control: Getting as creative as possible inside the rules. Find a balcony where you can talk with them below. Have them sing to you, dance for you, video all of it & send video.

#3 - Accept that change is normal



Change usually brings some anxiety



We learn something about ourselves when we master change



With new skills our self-worth increases



Mastering change reduces worry about future changes

#4 - Move toward your goals



Everyone needs a sense of achievement



Break big goals into small steps



Make each step achievable

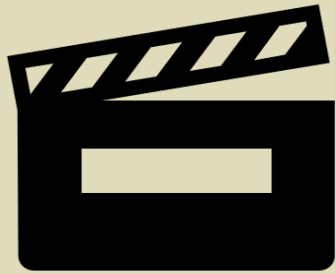


Have a defined end point



Literally check things off a list

#5 - Take decisive action



Focus on a problem

Determine which elements you can control

Make a plan and carry it out

You want to feel in charge of your life

Taking action counters feelings of helplessness

Do Something



Plan things you know you can do:

An activity once a day that helps your body relax

Plan moments to check in on life around you

Keep a gratitude journal

#6 - Look for opportunities for self-discovery



Look for fun, new things to try out:

Read about something you know little about

Try writing, dancing, singing, learning a new musical instrument, a new language

Learning something new builds self-esteem

#7 - Nurture a positive view of self



Remember when you bounced back from previous challenges

Each bounce-back strengthened your resilience

Each bounce-back improved your confidence

#8 - Keep things in perspective



Many crises seem never ending, but they all end

The world has always survived crises

You have a history of solving problems and bouncing back

#9 - Cultivate hope



Plan things that you will look forward to

When you look forward to things you have hope

Put reminders of these things where you will see them

#10 - Practice self-care



Follow safety guidelines

Think of what you already do to take care of yourself

Name one self-care strategy you want to add

How will you put that into practice this next week?



Changing behavior is difficult.



Look at your notes and pick one thing you want to do differently. Make a plan to do that one thing.





Believe that you can do this



After all, you have done more difficult things.