

Maintaining Your Sanity During Uncertain Rough Times

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It is already December and a new year is about to start. In ordinary times, this month is a festive season. A time for many happy occasions, gift exchange, more outings with family and friends especially those coming from abroad, and many other preparations. In ordinary times, this month is a time to experience some “eustress” (i.e. positive stress). In ordinary times, we had to make an effort to keep it all together and accommodate to more situational demands. We had to manage our time, expenditure, and resources during this very busy period.

Sadly, this December is not ordinary. We are witnessing a major crisis in Lebanon making it a time for great uncertainty. People are continuously on high alert to catch up with the day-to-day events. With eyes on the peoples’ revolution, the major political events, threats of dwindling resources and finances, inflation, the layoffs, the media’s focus on everything that could possibly be going wrong, etc.... Under these circumstances, how can you possibly make it through December with all that it requires? The ordinary eustress is changing to full blown psychological distress (at least for many who see it that way). People are oscillating between depressive and anxious states with increased vulnerability to the harmful consequences of excessive stress. So how can you maintain your sanity and cope with this extraordinary December and all its excessive demands?

The number one rule in stress management is to change or avoid any situation that stresses you out. If that’s not possible (like many external events occurring now), you can only change the way you’re reacting to the situation by either accepting it, or adapting to it. This, in turn, will require you to change your thoughts, and engage in different behaviors; thus, practicing resilience by regulating precipitating negative emotions that naturally surface during rough times. Maintaining psychological health requires an intention and active attempts to remain in charge. Doing nothing about it may lead one to lose grip. Here are few things to consider doing:

1. **Take care of yourself:** Make sure you have the basics right: sleeping, eating, and staying hydrated. This, also, needs to be topped up with stress reduction activities like doing physical exercise, deep breathing, meditation, yoga, etc... Put yourself first before any

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Here are few tips to practice during uncertainty & when there’s a prolonged crisis going on:

1. Take care of yourself & get the basics right
2. Take breaks away from the “news” & social media
3. Get busy working on a project
4. Take things a day at a time
5. Create good times to change your mood
6. Listen to music (it’s therapeutic)
7. Unleash your creativity in different ways
8. Cultivate gratitude & positivity
9. Be with supportive loving people
10. Focus on balancing your days



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other obligation; and “no!” that’s not being selfish. It’s just respecting yourself enough to give it what it deserves when it’s highly needed.

2. **Take breaks away from the “news” & social media:** This relieves you from the pressure of continuously being bombarded with information that has potential to forecast gloom and doom of the current situation. Do a total digital detox for a whole day if you have to.
3. **Get busy working on a project:** If your work is slow (or if you’re not employed to start with), have a “To Do *Productivity* List” of things you’ve procrastinated on doing before. Being productive will give you a great sense of achievement and is a good distraction away from the negative news. What’s even better is to focus on being useful by helping members in your community through their own difficulties. Resist the “freeze response” precipitating often from perceived stress.
4. **Take things a day at a time:** Whenever you find yourself worrying about the future, STOP!! Be in charge of your thoughts. Worrying is an anxiety symptom. It doesn’t solve the problems you *may* face later. Work on finding solutions for the daily problems you may have in the “*now*”.
5. **Create good times to change your mood:** Happiness is a temporary not eternal state. You have good reasons, now more than ever, to create moments throughout the day for such a boosting emotion. It could be by meeting with friends, doing fun activities, watching funny movies, or anything else that gives you pleasure. It creates a buffer for experienced stress.
6. **Listen to music:** create two playlists to “mindfully” listen to depending on your mood: one relaxing music to listen to when you’re anxious; and another upbeat to listen to when you’re feeling low (dancing to this music amplifies the good psychological effects). Music is therapeutic as attested by scientific research.
7. **Unleash your creativity:** One upside for moderate stress is that it boosts the brain’s creativity power. Think of ways to work around the current stressors. For instance, low finances can lead you to adopting new ways to economize (i.e. home baked items, handmade gifts, cheaper ways for entertainment, etc...).
8. **Cultivate gratitude and positivity:** It is powerful to intensify practicing gratitude daily and focusing on the positives of negative situations as a way to adapt to things you can’t change.
9. **Be with supportive loving people:** Reach out to people you love and vent out your concerns. Your support system is much needed in rough times. They need you too. Research repeatedly associates greater wellbeing being with having a good social circle.
10. **Stay focused on balancing your days:** Keep your internal thermostat in check socially and psychologically. Avoid extremes like “too much” of everything: isolation, excessive socializing, over/under working, over/under sleeping, over /under eating, etc...

These are but few guidelines to feel more in charge during this rough period in time when it’s supposed to be more festive. In fact, you can apply these throughout for better psychological

health. When the going gets tougher, though, you need to be tougher in your attempts to remain in charge. And remember: "This too shall pass!"

Your Personal Coach

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