

Vaccinating Your Mind: Addressing Mental Health

Even though we have seen a drop in the Covid-19 cases in Malaysia, with the physical distancing, travel restrictions, unpredictability of the pandemic, and the uncertain economic outlook, it can be tough not to slide into despair. As the hunt for a vaccine continues, mental health concerns are on the rise, and we might just need a “vaccine” for the mind, too!

We know that a vaccine trains the immune system to fight a disease it has not come into contact with before. Similarly, it is important to have strategies to train our mind to fight the different negative thoughts that might occur to us in these times of uncertainty. In the same way that a vaccine works by training the immune system to recognize and combat pathogens, we can train our minds to identify and combat negative thinking.

Here, I've put together three quick steps that came together from things that I have done myself and things that my MentCouch family said worked for them. As a mental health practitioner, I'd like to emphasise that if ever a moment called for understanding the concept of resilience and silencing negative thoughts, this is it.

Building Resilience: We've seen that 2020 has been a rocky year with a lot of catastrophes along the way. Resilient people can cope better and maintain a fundamental sense of well-being. Resilience, simply put, is the ability to bounce back. It doesn't mean you're positive through and through; it just means you experience and acknowledge the bad, but work to build yourself up again emotionally so you can still function in a healthy way. The first step to becoming resilient is to accept the situation that you are in. “Acceptance” may sound simplistic, but it is an extremely difficult act. The second step is to take into account what factors you can control, rather than being anxious about things out of your control. Many things have



changed for all of us in a short amount of time. We had no control over it; so dwelling on resenting these changes will not help much. What can help is monitoring how we react to it.

Managing Your Internal Narrator:

These days we are either spending our time alone or with our small nuclear group of family or friends. We've got more time to think about stuff. We're checking the social media more frequently. We're more introspective and we have more time for our minds to wander. This is why we need to have control over our inner “voice”. We all have a voice in our head that provides a constant running commentary to our lives. Among other things, this “voice” points out flaws, it leads to overthinking, it says negative and offensive things, it manufactures fears and worries. Sometimes, it can be motivating but it is inconsistent. And inconsistency is exhausting. There will be particular things that this voice repeats that have a profoundly negative effect on our mind. These might be worries or fears. Hence, it is important that we identify these negative elements and list them down separately. Rather than reacting indecisively or instinctively, once you have identified the thought or voice, there are three possible actions:

- **Keep it**, because it is helpful and constructive and will add value to your life;

- **Amend/Replace it**, so that it becomes positive and useful;
- **Demolish it**, because it has no positive impact on your life and you have no direct control over it.

Those of you who practice mindfulness or yoga may be able to silence this voice a bit more easily. To others, this will be new, and for that it is always a good idea to seek help. At MentCouch psychology centre we have “wellbeing and mindfulness services” specially curated to combat “the voice”. And that leads to our final point:

Asking for Help: The stress from pandemic uncertainty and the related upheaval can be too much to handle alone for many of us, especially those with pre-existing mental health conditions. Now is the time to prioritize mental health and get that mind “vaccine”.

At MentCouch psychology centre we offer various services:

- Mental Health Screening & Assessment
- Wellbeing Screening
- Psychological Consultation
- Counseling

We have various relaxation and one of its kind wellbeing services like:

- Ho'oponopono Meditation (Hawaiian Method of Forgiveness)
- Sound Healing
- Therapeutic Yoga
- Mindfulness Therapy
- Active Listening Service

Visit mentcouch.com for more information and find the best suited service for you. Our services are not only meant for people with concerns, it is for everyone! ■

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