

Coping with COVID-19

Upper Island Counselling

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EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR RE-OPENINGS & TRANSITIONS

For the past few weeks BC residents have been shifting from isolation to cautious interaction, as BC officially moved to Phase 2 of Covid-19 response mid-May (with Phase 3 slated for mid to late June). Businesses are opening their doors and adapting to changing protocols to keep staff and customers safe. Families and friends are starting to socialize both indoors and outdoors. And, students are returning to school for the final weeks of the year.

These changes signal a return to our 'pre-Covid' lives. However, most of these daily activities still look quite different than before. Physical distancing, frequent handwashing and sanitizing, wearing face masks, maintaining small groups, etc. continue to be utilized to prevent a rise in Coronavirus cases.

And, while some are breathing a sigh of relief, others are feeling apprehensive about proceeding with the more relaxed, and sometimes ambiguous guidelines. With this new and challenging territory, comes the normal reaction of feeling confused, frustrated, and anxious as well as judgement toward both ourselves and others.

To support you through this transition we'd like to introduce a tool called **RAIN**. This tool is intended to help us pause, take stock of our experience, and offer ourselves and others a dose of compassion (like a big mental hug).

RAIN:

Recognize. Ask yourself "What is it that I'm feeling?" "What am I thinking about right now?" "What am I experiencing?"

Allow: Allow what you notice and do not judge it, just let it come and go.

Investigate: Engage with your deep sense of curiosity – look at things as if you've never seen them before.

Nurture: Now that you have recognized your feelings, allowed yourself to have those feelings, and looked at them with curiosity – provide yourself (and maybe others if applicable) a huge dose compassion.

Not quite sure how to use this in practice? Below is a story about how to use **RAIN** to help navigate the stress and anxiety at the grocery store:



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*Going into the store I noticed that many (but not all) customers were wearing masks. I noticed myself thinking, 'I wonder if I should wear a mask – I wish there was a straightforward policy to follow'. I **recognized** feeling weirdly frustrated about having to decide whether to wear a mask or not. I **allowed** that frustration to sit with me, including the initial muscle tension it brought along. I **investigated** where this was coming from – recalling how making decisions about distancing/PPE isn't always simple, is tiring, and sometimes anxiety inducing. I thought about those who are vulnerable, those who must work in public settings, those who are upset about continued restrictions – about how each of us is constantly making decisions about how to proceed in the time of Coronavirus. I then **nurtured** – I told myself that it was 'ok and normal to feel frustrated about having to make these types of decisions each time I do a simple task. Prior to mid-March, this was not part of my day-to-day reality. All of us are trying to do our best in strange circumstances'. Ultimately, I decided to wear a mask. The decision came from a place of empathy for those who are at higher risk of complications from the virus. Using the RAIN approach, I gained awareness of my own experience and was better able to make a decision based on my belief that I should be doing my part to protect those more vulnerable than myself – rather than sticking with my initial reaction of feeling frustrated and yes, maybe even a little rebellious.*

Using this tool can feel a little strange the first few times. And reading it here, it might sound like it takes several minutes to run through each part. However, with a little practice it only takes a moment out of your day to check in with yourself using RAIN.

If you'd like to listen to a podcast about RAIN, this is a great one: <https://kimberleyquinlan-lmft.com/ep-141-a-mindfulness-tool-to-help-with-coronavirus-anxiety/>

We know that many of you, our members, are facing fears and challenges around reopening your businesses, or returning to the office, given the transitions into phase 2 and 3. We recognize that this transition may bring diverse emotions from relief and excitement, to apprehension and anxiety. We are here for you as you work to navigate these times as an organization, and individually. And we encourage you to access these resources for helpful tips and toolkits.

- <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates>
- <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/bc-restart-plan>

The team at Upper Island Counselling would like to send a big THANK YOU to our member companies who support their employees and their families by continuing to provide our services to them during this unusual time.