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The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Health Care:

A Psychologist's Perspective

By Pamela A. McCaskill, Ph.D., LP

Have you ever wondered what this past year has been like from a psychologist's perspective? People often ask me, how are you doing in the midst of all this chaos? To put it mildly, the past 14 months have been a whirlwind for myself and our team [Meet Our Team](#).

The Storm Hit

Seemingly overnight, activities ceased, and everyone dispersed, secluded within their homes, as the COVID-19 pandemic quickly emerged and dominated the landscape. Many of us, our clients and family members all suffered significant losses. Parents (including many of us!) have found themselves on "triple-duty" – parenting, teaching, and working. Most people became isolated from peers and support systems outside their homes, but we found that children, teens and college students have been hit especially hard.

Our team of psychologists had to quickly figure out tele-health technology & adapt to connecting with suffering people via computer screens. I was stressed, my staff were stressed, our families & friends were stressed, and our clients were stressed, as many things previously relied upon to help us cope during challenging times suddenly became unavailable. Important aspects of our worlds simply seemed to be failing all around us.

How We survived

We found that taking deep breaths, trying to focus on the positive and finding some benefit in problems/ challenges, limiting exposure to social media (and the daily news reports!), regular exercise, and active mindfulness practices were our life-preservers. The benefits of being part of a group practice became very apparent, as we leaned on & helped each other navigate the storm – we were so much better together and could not have done this alone.

An Unexpected Aftermath

I recall thinking, "We can get through this for a month...OK, for 3 months... OK, 6 months...um, OK...for a year? Wait..." Now 14 months later, people are starting to emerge from their homes and those businesses fortunate enough to survive the pandemic experiences are opening back up. However, even as the pandemic appears to be subsiding and with our world in the process of regaining some sense of normality, we find ourselves in the midst of a serious continuing mental-health crisis, with huge spikes in anxiety, depression, stress, domestic violence and suicide. Yes, we as mental health professionals are trained for this – we want to help, we can help, and we do help. However, there simply are not enough hours in the day to see everyone we would like to see while addressing their needs sufficiently and so, unfortunately, we have had to triage the most pressing needs, with other clients in legitimate need of help on waiting lists for the next available resource. Mental health units in hospitals are full, so we find

ourselves treating people with more severe mental illnesses (genuinely in need of inpatient treatment) on an outpatient basis.

What Now?

I think this is going to a long haul in the field of mental health – trauma, loss, depression & anxiety do not resolve overnight, and people truly are suffering. We are taking care of ourselves and each other, putting us in positions to better help others and retaining quality-care standards. However, this also means that our resources & availability can be limited at times, requiring service waiting lists for new clients seeking help. Now, as the owner of the practice, my focus is on working together to preserve our tight-knit practice family and expand our team of mental health providers to continue to optimally serve our communities. Are you a psychologist looking to join an amazing group practice? [Click Here](#)