

'CONDITION YOUR MIND FOR CHANGE POST COVID'

malini.menon@timesgroup.com

In the wake of the pandemic, the new normal-as has been coined-is a rather "abnormal" situation that perhaps every household wants to get out of. How long will it take to unmask ourselves and lead a normal life is a question that is looming on everyone's mind? **PSYCHIATRIST DR KAVITA ARORA** from Children First, New Delhi, talks on how normal may have to be redefined as the world may not slip easily into the old style. The daily congregations for work, social life, travel and celebrations will see a new era, says Dr Arora.

Need for rehab

Almost every family has been affected by Covid in some way or the other. While adults may have gone through health issues to financial problems, for children, the access to the usual spaces that formed their ecosystem for holistic development has been suspended. One needs to, therefore, be prepared for transition even when the pandemic is contained. For, a lot would have changed when the world gets back to work-business styles, how schools will function, how people would be looking out for new jobs, how new skills would be sought after, how women would have learnt the art of multi-tasking and in fact, even in the way the families would function.

Role of parents

By looking at the drivers that have led to this above cluster of symptoms - do we think the children are finding it meaningful to be passive recipients of the pandemic? They have been told that adults are handling it- they just need to comply- regardless of the absolute change in standard- including our about-turn on screen time usage- preference for working harder to keep our jobs over family time. The need is to recognise what the last year has taught us.

1 Ask yourself - what are the skills and qualities that have helped most of us in this time? When you have your answer e.g.

The sense of the collective over the sense of the individual (the "me" to the "we"), the humaneness, compassion, empathy, resilience, communication skills, looking after our own bodies, being able to connect to others, the ability to stay by and within one self and create our own grounding and joy- whatever the answer- the next step is to ask: Am I providing an environment where my child is being taught these skills? Or am I nurturing these qualities in them? If not, be mindful of nurturing these life skills in the family. When families and children are far more connected to the collective and to their inner sense of purpose and meaning- the loneliness and irritability decreases.

2 Engage children in collective roles, make them understand their privileges over those who don't have them. If adults appreciate each other and express gratitude, children will emulate.

3 Tips to corporates facing a burnout and relationship breakdowns.

Invest in the people: Human beings make mistakes during stress. Health and socio-emotional needs have to take precedence in a time like this. Corporates could give rotatory day offs/ reduce timings or alter timings for WFH practises to accommodate the needs of

working parents, or those with elderly parents to look after.

Collective belonging

Starting forums like "listening circles" or "chat with someone when you are feeling alone", helplines to call when quarantined or isolated, are all helpful to prevent and alleviate the exhaustion that is prevalent right now.

The recognition that this exhaustion is not just about work but about the increased thinking and planning required to stay calm, that the needs of a household and therefore the requirements of presence and effort to nurture themselves and other members within a family has completely changed. If we can help each other acknowledge and provide for this need, burnouts can be mitigated. Resources within communities, when synergised are



HOW SHOULD FIRMS UNLOCK TO STAFF

1 The two-year stressful period and unprecedented change has had an impact on people's minds, far more than what meets the eye. Many people have lost their loved ones and hence, organisations must give employees time to heal and allow at least a partial closure of the tragedy, until they feel fit enough to resume charge.

2 Give people some time to accept the fact that a lot has changed in the past two years- be it in employment status, salaries, peer bonding etc. Hence, realistic goals and targets should be set, keeping in mind what the employee is going through in his personal life.

3 When employees get vaccinated, firms should facilitate a smooth transition from 'work from home' to resuming normal office by giving them options such as taking up WFH for three days a week initially and then, gradually moving to 6-days office. In fact, a hybrid environment is the way forward.

4 Psychological counselling is a must for those employees who have just recovered from Covid and are facing post-Covid fatigue.



ASK THE EXPERT
A SHOT OF HOPE



Dr Niru Kumar, psychologist and life coach