



EDITORIAL

From Pandemic to War in a Blink of an Eye. Living amidst Uncertainty

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Like drifting a stormy sea on a boat, humankind surfed the COVID-19 wave by wave, for each one hoping it would be the last one. Our whole lives shifted from being together to being apart for safety. We were no longer safe around each other and we needed to find ways to cope with the physical distance, fear of getting ill, anxieties, uncertainties, exhaustion and losses.

Our basic need for predictability (Glynn et al., 2021) and safety (Abulof, 2017) got once again shuttered when facing the war as close to our homes we could feel and see its horrifying consequences from day one: panic, fear, despair, tears, loss, separation, hunger, cold, disease (Murthy & Lakshminarayana, 2006; Garfin et al., 2018; Mbah & Wasum, 2022). It all came to us almost without warning, almost without any time to recover from losses of the pandemic.

And yet, we somehow manage to keep on moving. Slowly, hesitating at the beginning, more and more self adjusted to a body of alarming news (Riehm et. Al., 2020). What does it take to move on in times of unpredictability?

As Bloomberg (2021) quotes, risk includes things we can measure and see coming, uncertainty arises from the things that take us by surprise. Having to face the war, we all asked ourselves what is to be done? How is this going to affect us in every aspect? Decisions were to be made with regards to the safety of ourselves and our loved ones.

According to Lipshitz & Strauss (1997) decision makers undergo three types of uncertainty: inadequate understanding, incomplete information,

and undifferentiated alternatives. Inadequate understanding is the price we pay for the freedom of speech. Anyone can literally say anything on social media and the story goes viral. We struggle to find truth and we find it according to our own beliefs, social status, education. The internet keeps feeding us on what we look for and so does the media, depending where we look for information (Lorenz-Spreen et al., 2021). As Chris Bail poses in Nature (2022), the next question is what types of algorithm could encourage consensus and discourage hate, abuse and division. Meanwhile, we are dealing with incomplete information by filling the gaps according to our possibilities and access to adequate resources. An article in APA Abrams (2022, April) states there is a psychological warfare in the battle for Ukraine and social media disinformation and manipulation are causing confusion, fueling hostilities, and amplifying atrocities around the world and skills needed to protect against misinformation and psychological manipulation online are digital literacy, understanding how the online world works, how to recognize fact vs. opinion, and how algorithms drive information our way; civics and citizenship: to behave responsibly toward others in our online networks and finally, cybersecurity: the ability to recognize and rebuff techniques used by both hackers and online manipulators. By all means, it is education all the way. Last, but not least, undifferentiated alternatives, probably the most complex uncertainty. Researchers found common ground here, whatever the decision is, flexibility seems the adaptive answer (Arslan & Allen, 2022).

We need to rethink our lives, our priorities using a big dose of flexibility. During Covid-19 crisis, parent inflexibility was linked to lower functioning across all family sub-systems, parent flexibility was linked to greater family cohesion and constructive parenting, parent inflexibility predicted more COVID-19 related stress and stress from the new work/family demands of COVID-19 predicted more family discord and family discord predicted more caustic parenting, which predicted child distress (DaksaJack, Peltz & Rogge, 2020).

The way individuals react and cope during uncertain situations is “constantly, changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal aspects, which demand a lot of individual abilities or even exceeds those abilities.” (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). It is what researchers consider psychological flexibility. It refers to an individual's ability to cope with, accept, and adjust to difficult situations (Tindle & Moustafa, 2021) or the ability to respond to stimuli in a manner that is functional given a particular context, and that

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is congruent with personal values (Bergman & Keitel, 2020).

In sum, exposure to the threat of war today, requires the necessity to finding sense and meaning beyond the fact that we experience a different kind of normal. A normal where individuals may encounter other pandemics (Shanmugaraj et al., 2022) and new wars and we all have to find resilience and keep living our lives. How flexibility looks like in daily life, it is a matter of adjusting to the context in the own most suitable ways. Mental health specialists' common advice is to keep connecting to people, not screens, nurture our bodies, be physically active, stay involved and present at home (Eltanamy, 2021) and at work and nevertheless, stop scrolling (Caubergh, 2022). Moreover, today more than ever volunteering to help others might open new doors to collective coping (Jiang, 2021) and finding meaning amidst uncertainty and threat. As a wise man once said, we should accept the things we cannot change, have courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference.

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