

Clip 3: COVID-19 and our bodies

The words and the headlines used to describe this new state of being have a lot to do with our bodies.

Lockdown.

Emptied out.

Staying

Prepping

Distancing.

Isolating

War

Stuck

They all have this quality of collapsing down, contracting, and armoring. Like those folding travel cups - that fold into themselves and are the shape of the largest ring. Like a turtle tucking its head into its hard shell (which is a part of its body - not separate). Trauma is contraction. A folding. And yet, what the armoring looks like is not the same for everyone. I mentioned the ingrained patterns of trauma responses before -- these don't fit into neat categories. Armoring and responding from our survival strategies may not return us to a place that we can tolerate for long. Before I started somatic practices and coping with PTSD, if something small threw me off in my day, it would take me a long

time to get settled again, to be able to move on with my day. I didn't have a great way of returning my level of arousal to the place where I could make a choice about what would come next. Now, things still throw me off, but these tools help me find a center and supportive back to make good choices.

Luckily, there's other phrases you hear out there too right now that flow well with an embodied choice-filled approach to living with a pandemic.

Protect each other.

Stronger Together.

Reach out for help.

Connecting.

Gathering online in spite of.

We will survive.

Our commitment to be in community is older and wiser than this pandemic. Our commitments as a faith community pre-dates the intensity of covid-19 and orient us toward the future, toward interdependence.

It may overwhelm our minds to envision the future and not be sure about what it will look like, where it will be, and who will be there. Somatic awareness can help with this stage, too.

If while I am speaking, maybe you were feeling some sort of sensation or you felt your mood shift or maybe you checked out to some of what I've said. I just want to greet you again, thank your body for taking care of you in this moment. You don't need to fight against it. Welcome. Thank you for being here with all the natural contractions of bodies doing their best.

“Notice where your body is being physically supported. Pay attention to the sensations of your feet on the floor, your sitting bones on the chair, your back on the wall or chair. Keep bringing your attention to what your tissues and nerve endings are feeling with this contact. Notice what it feels like to have the floor/chair/wall, etc. consistently holding you.”[scan?]

The theory I've presented can calm our nervous systems down by tethering the work we might do with our bodies to our intellect, to an organized scaffolding. It can help us prepare to get curious about our body's experience, at the level of sensations - that is, the building blocks of our emotions -- temperature, movement, mood.

We can become aware of our bodies and able to engage with what we care about.