COVID-19 Mental Health & Coping Resources

F O R E V E R Y O N E

## B U I L D I N G R E S I L I E N C E S E R I E S

Part 1 of this series covered how to accept our current reality. Acceptance doesn't mean we have to like the situation – no one likes that we're facing COVID-19. Yet we can accept that we may be forced to experience negative emotions. When we can learn to exist with these emotions without struggling, running away, or giving them undue attention, the grip of fear is loosened. Our autonomy increases and we can move forward. Part 3 of the Building Resilience Series is on how to move forward by working with fear.

Working with fear

Fear is a fundamental, deeply wired reaction that protects us against perceived threat. When we are triggered, our "thinking" brain gives feedback to our "emotional" brain - in other words, our thoughts inform our emotional response, which influences what we do next.

If a thought is telling you, "I dread what the future holds," the emotions that follow will likely be extreme such as fear/anxiety, and your body will brace for danger. When you still have to work, take care of your family and manage your health, this threat response can detract from those goals. Re-framing the thought to, "Day-by-day, I make informed decisions with the information I have," may result in emotions that are action-oriented, such as confidence/motivation, and your body will remain calm.

Building the skill of re-framing thoughts can help us increase our personal resilience to the adversities we face. Here is a inquiry-based process for working with internal mind chatter.
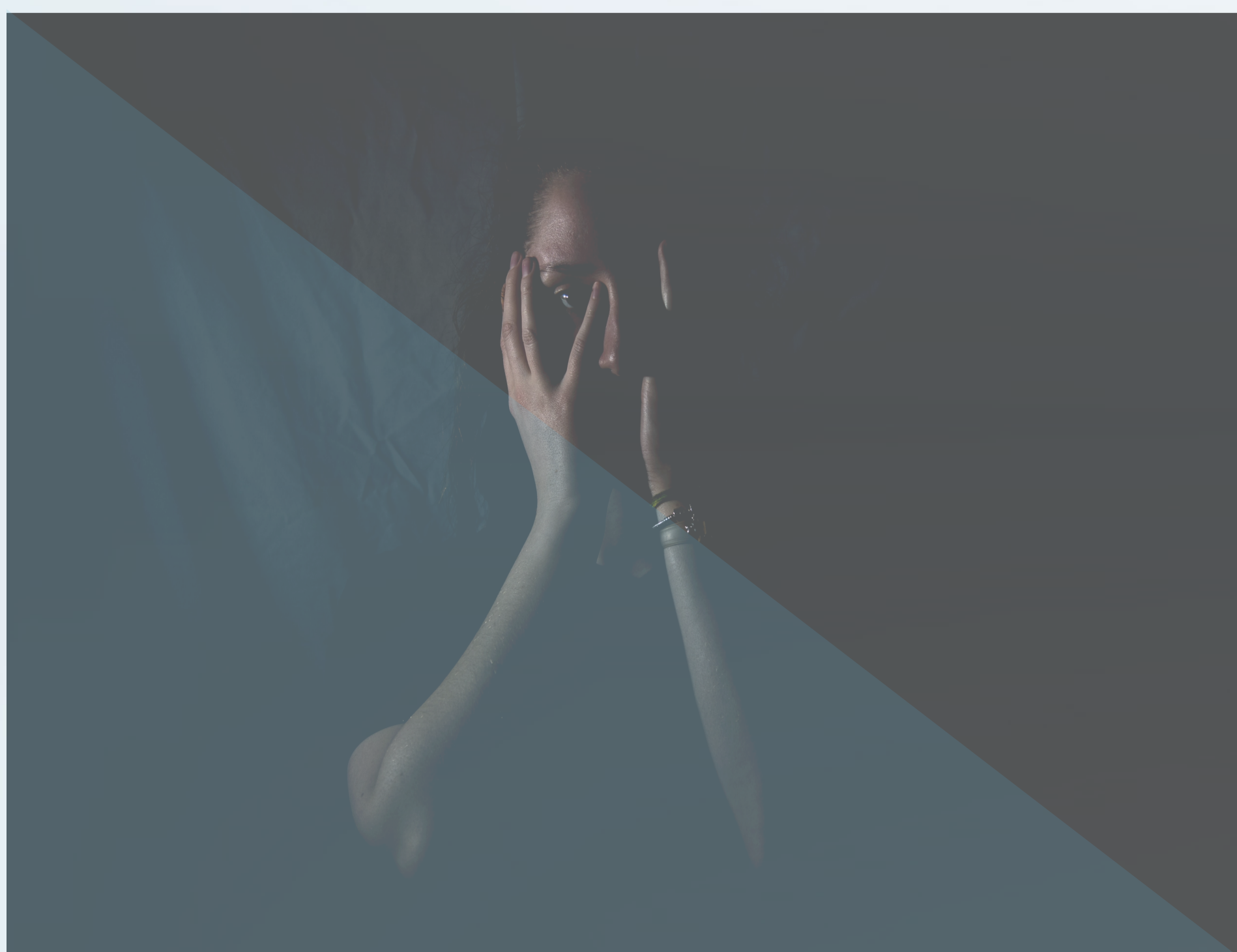
1. Investigate your fear. When you tell yourself bad things are going to happen ("I'll never survive this"), your subsequent interactions, behaviors and actions become clouded by that heaviness. Pause and ask yourself:

- What am I saying to myself at this moment?

2. Use critical questions to look for facts, not feelings. Then, disrupt that catastrophic thought by asking yourself the following:

- Is this statement true? What is the evidence for or against this assumption?
- Does thinking this way help me get through the day in a productive way or does it paralyze me?

These questions create space for you to assess if your thoughts are helping or hurting you.

3. Replace the unhelpful thought with one that is more rational. If the answers to these questions are no, create a healthier, more realistic thought that helps you think more objectively, feel better emotionally and behave more functionally.

- What is a more realistic thought that promotes security instead of panic? How can I prepare for the most probable scenario?

This exercise is not about denying the seriousness of COVID-19, it's about turning down the overwhelming noise of your negative mind chatter.

*If you feel overwhelmed or need help, please work with a mental health professional.