



## To Mask or not to Mask...

April 2022

Happy spring everyone, and thank you everyone for working as hard as you do and have in the last 2 years, the most amazing and abrupt changes our culture has seen since the Second World War.

As we start to shift from indoors to outdoors more often, we are in a simultaneous shift from pandemic protocols to what is now called our "new normal". What is our new normal?

This newsletter is about change and something called cognitive dissonance. Cognitive means thinking, and dissonance means not in harmony. So in short, it is when what is happening is not in line with what we thought would happen. Cognitive dissonance is what is responsible for the majority of the stress we face in a first world culture.

"The state of having inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes, especially as relating to behavioral decisions and attitude change."

How do you know if you have cognitive dissonance?



Signs you might be experiencing cognitive dissonance include: Discomfort of unclear origin, confusion, feeling conflicted over a disputed subject matter, people telling you you're being a hypocrite, or being aware of conflicting views and/or desires but not knowing what to do with them.

Our communities were brought to a halt in March of 2020, fear permeated and toilet paper disappeared from the grocery store shelves. Now, two full years later, all of the changes we have made, wearing masks, standing 6 ft. apart, waiting respectfully while someone gets something off of a grocery store shelf, has changed again, and the problem named covid, is still here.

This creates dissonance, do I need to wear a mask? Most people are not wearing a mask, some people are, I am still afraid of catching something, others appear to not be afraid, this is confusing.

Over the course of the pandemic, people established very different values, some lined up to be vaccinated, and some were adamantly not going to do that. Those differences have created large gaps in friends and families, lifetime friends have distanced and dropped each other as a result of these vastly differing beliefs. There is then dissonance between people that thought they were lifelong friends, and now, may not even be speaking.

What are the 3 causes of cognitive dissonance? Causes of cognitive dissonance can include:

- **being forced to comply with something against their beliefs**
- **having to decide between different choices**
- **having to put effort into the goal**

At this time it becomes so important to come back to basics that keep us in balance. We are moving through a different world now that requires us to establish a healthy discipline to self care.

The four pillars of health are:

- **sleep**
- **good food**
- **exercise**
- **community**

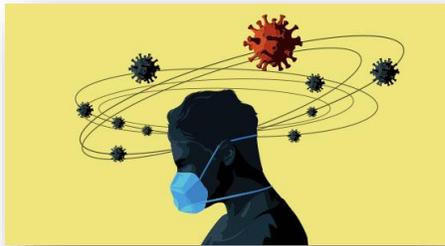
Sleep hygiene, go to bed without a screen, and try to get 7 or 8 hours per 24 hours. Eat food that has good nutrition that fuels the body with energy it can use. Exercise every day, an hour a day is best, but some is better than none. Walking in the forest helps so much with brain reset and body health.

Spend time with others that really like you. Community is the biggest part of recovering from the loneliness and isolation that has become a part of our every day habit. This is our biggest challenge, to break out of the isolating habits that we have established for the last two years.

How is cognitive dissonance resolved?

Dissonance can be reduced in one of three ways:

- Changing existing beliefs,
- Adding new beliefs, or
- Reducing the importance of the beliefs.



**Changing a belief:** is not as simple as saying it, saying a belief though that includes all the changes can be helpful. "One constant in life is change" "I have been through many changes in life, and I can adjust" Saying something that helps our mind encompass what is happening prepares us well for handling things.

**Adding new beliefs:** How can we resolve cognitive dissonance? If I believe that my employer cares for me, I will look for the evidence of that. If I believe that my employer doesn't care about me, I will look for the evidence of that. Add a belief that serves you. Henry Ford said "Whether you think you can't or you can, you're right."

**Reducing the importance of beliefs:** Did you ever grow up avoiding cracks so you didn't break your Mother's back? Not step on a spider so it wouldn't rain? Maybe you have never heard of these or it awakens a long forgotten rhyme. If you remember it long ago and haven't thought it about it before you read these words that would be an example of reducing the importance of beliefs.

You get to decide the beliefs that aren't serving you and when you notice the belief pop up, then you can decide what you would rather believe. I would rather believe that cracks in the road have nothing to do with my Mother ☺

Before covid happened I used to believe that working by zoom or on telephone was not good enough, that in person counselling was truly the best way. Over covid and having had just as many great sessions over the telephone and over zoom, I have reduced the importance of my original belief.

This is an example of how dissonance happened for me. As a result of covid, we now offer counselling by phone, zoom, or in person again as of May 2022.

If you are coming in person to counselling and have symptoms of any illness, please simply let our office know and we will shift the appointment to either of these other ways. Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter.

*We're here to help!*

*Please be reminded that we are here for you to speak to someone should you be experiencing any distress that is interfering in your life.*



*If you have questions, need information or wish to book an appointment, Please call us at one of our numbers listed below.*



305 - 394 Duncan St  
Duncan, BC V9L 3W4

**Vancouver Island Counselling**

Duncan: 250 746 6900

Nanaimo: 250 754 8222

Port Alberni: 250 723 7001

Victoria / Gulf Islands / Lower Mainland

1 877 746 6911