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On Acceptance Long-Covid-19 and Mental Health

By Dan Hess

If you're like me, it's easy to fall into self-judgment. I don't read quickly enough. I'm not in good enough shape. A million other things, some supposedly in my control, others clearly not. Some things involve other people. I make a clever little comment at Starbucks, and the barista doesn't smile. So I get mad at myself, or maybe annoyed at them. I vow to myself I'll never try that again! These vows never seem to last very long.

We even judge ourselves while sleeping. Who hasn't dreamt of some embarrassing situation, where they show up for something completely unprepared? Our mind doesn't give us much relief.

At some point, we learn about the idea of acceptance. Acceptance of self, of others, of the world. It feels so inspiring to think about, and talk about. We can look in the mirror and stop judging ourselves. We are good enough as we are. And on second thought, maybe it's not our job to entertain that

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By David Brody, MD

A year and a half after the start of the global pandemic, we recognize that for many persons who developed symptomatic Covid-19 illnesses, recovery has stalled (e.g., "long-haulers"). In studies assessing Covid-19 survivors at two weeks or more after initial infection, most report at least one persistent symptom. In studies looking at individuals four weeks or longer after infection, 20 – 50% of report persistent symptoms including loss of taste and smell, breathing difficulties, fatigue, headache, and cognitive problems (e.g., "brain fog"). In recognition of this problem, many medical centers have set up specialized post-Covid treatment centers. We are still trying to grasp the full extent of the problem as well as learning how to diagnose and treat many of these persistent symptoms.

What are the mental health consequences of Covid-19 infection? Studies to date looking at Covid-19 survivors have found significant numbers of individuals reporting anxiety, depression, and post-

traumatic stress symptoms. It appears that psychiatric disorders can be diagnosed in about 20% of survivors. Most of these individuals are likely experiencing the return or recurrence of previously diagnosed disorders; it is estimated that only 5% of post-Covid psychiatric disorders are new diagnoses. There is no evidence that Covid-19 is a specific risk factor for symptoms of bipolar disorder. And rates of suicide in high and middle-income countries either did not change or declined during the pandemic.

In sum, a significant number of individuals infected with the Covid-19 virus have a protracted course of illness, with clear impacts on mental health. As more studies are published, we will develop a more nuanced understanding of how to screen Covid-19 survivors for psychiatric disorders as well as how to select the most effective treatments. I will delve into these issues in more detail in my September 9, 2021 lecture.

Dr Brody is a medical advisor to and a Board member of MDSG. Particulars about his lecture will appear on the MDSG website.

Items of Interest

Psychcentral.com “7 Surprising Symptoms & Hidden Signs of Bipolar Disorder”

[https://psychcentral.com/bipolar/surprising-signs-hidden-symptoms-of-bipolar-disorder?](https://psychcentral.com/bipolar/surprising-signs-hidden-symptoms-of-bipolar-disorder?slot_pos=article_2&utm_source=Sailthru%20Email&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=weekly&utm_content=2021-07-14&apid=&rvid=3be63f7fddaef39591ea38370cc2db823d3c90e13d91b8e3181384d287740f47)

[slot_pos=article_2&utm_source=Sailthru%](https://psychcentral.com/bipolar/surprising-signs-hidden-symptoms-of-bipolar-disorder?slot_pos=article_2&utm_source=Sailthru%20Email&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=weekly&utm_content=2021-07-14&apid=&rvid=3be63f7fddaef39591ea38370cc2db823d3c90e13d91b8e3181384d287740f47)

[20Email&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=weekly&utm_content=2021-07-](https://psychcentral.com/bipolar/surprising-signs-hidden-symptoms-of-bipolar-disorder?slot_pos=article_2&utm_source=Sailthru%20Email&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=weekly&utm_content=2021-07-14&apid=&rvid=3be63f7fddaef39591ea38370cc2db823d3c90e13d91b8e3181384d287740f47)

[14&apid=&rvid=3be63f7fddaef39591ea38370cc2db823d3c90e13d91b8e3181384d287740f47](https://psychcentral.com/bipolar/surprising-signs-hidden-symptoms-of-bipolar-disorder?slot_pos=article_2&utm_source=Sailthru%20Email&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=weekly&utm_content=2021-07-14&apid=&rvid=3be63f7fddaef39591ea38370cc2db823d3c90e13d91b8e3181384d287740f47)

HealthPlace “Explaining a Family Member’s Diagnosis to Others” <https://www.healthypace.com/blogs/mentalillnessinthefamily/2021/7/explaining-a-family-members-diagnosis-to-others>

HealthyPlace “Bipolar Self-Harm: Why Do We Do It?” <https://www.healthypace.com/blogs/speakingoutaboutselfinjury/2021/7/bipolar-self-harm-why-do-we-do-it>

HealthyPlace “Surviving the Everyday Stigma of Mental Illness” <https://www.healthypace.com/blogs/survivingmentalhealthstigma/2014/06/surviving-the-everyday-stigma-of-mental-illness>

Psychcentral “10 Tips To Help the Therapist Help You Get the Most Out of Sessions” [https://psychcentral.com/lib/therapists-spill-10-tips-for-making-the-most-of-therapy?slot_pos=article_4&utm_source=Sailthru%](https://psychcentral.com/lib/therapists-spill-10-tips-for-making-the-most-of-therapy?slot_pos=article_4&utm_source=Sailthru%20Email&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=weekly&utm_content=2021-07-14&apid=&rvid=3be63f7fddaef39591ea38370cc2db823d3c90e13d91b8e3181384d287740f47)

[20Email&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=weekly&utm_content=2021-07-](https://psychcentral.com/lib/therapists-spill-10-tips-for-making-the-most-of-therapy?slot_pos=article_4&utm_source=Sailthru%20Email&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=weekly&utm_content=2021-07-14&apid=&rvid=3be63f7fddaef39591ea38370cc2db823d3c90e13d91b8e3181384d287740f47)

[14&apid=&rvid=3be63f7fddaef39591ea38370cc2db823d3c90e13d91b8e3181384d287740f47](https://psychcentral.com/lib/therapists-spill-10-tips-for-making-the-most-of-therapy?slot_pos=article_4&utm_source=Sailthru%20Email&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=weekly&utm_content=2021-07-14&apid=&rvid=3be63f7fddaef39591ea38370cc2db823d3c90e13d91b8e3181384d287740f47)

On Acceptance

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barista after all, and not their job to smile. The world feels a little bit better.

Except something is wrong.

Acceptance is deceptively hard. Soon enough it becomes something else that we are not good enough at. We hear someone proudly talking about their own self-acceptance, and we get a guilty little lurch. It wasn't enough! We feel like we are back at zero.

Once acceptance has become another unapproachable standard that we can't live up to, it is time to put it aside for a while. We're under

enough stress already.

At the risk of giving advice: use ideas only so long as they help you. If they aren't working for you, or even making things worse, move on to something else, no matter how noble the ideas sound, or how well they're working for your friends. You could also give yourself a break from changing your mind altogether.

We're all on this journey together, but that doesn't mean we're all going to find the same truths. I hope you find your path, no matter how it goes.

Dan Hess is a member of the MDSG Board.

Mood Disorders Support Group
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