

# **Mental Health: The Second Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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## **System One and System Two Thinking (Kahneman)**

### **System One**

- Unconscious. Comes out of the Limbic Region of the Brain
- Substitutes easy questions for hard ones
- Believes the things that are easy to believe
- Operates using habits (or habitual thinking)
- Uses built in rules of thumb (heuristics)
- "What you see is all there is"
- Role: Assess the situation, deliver updates

### **System Two**

- Conscious and Effortful. Comes out of the Prefrontal Cortex
- Processes between 5-9 pieces of information at any time
- Can override thinking errors through effortful thought
- Done with self-awareness and control
- Is logical and skeptical
- Role: Seeks new and missing information to make decisions

## **Five Strategies for Coping and Increasing Resiliency During Covid-19**

### **Strategy #1- Be a Curious Observer of... You!**

- "We can't change what we don't know"
- "When I do, hear, interact with \_\_\_\_\_, what happens?"
  - Check the following areas: thoughts, feelings, actions/reactions, body sensations

### **Strategy #2- Engage in Regular Emotional and Sensory Regulation**

- Notice when you are moving into fight-flight-freeze
- Determine what allows you to maintain a "relaxed body" while at work or when perceiving a threat
- Regularly practice skills that help to widen your window of tolerance

### **Strategy #3- Maintain Connection with Others**

- Our nervous systems are built to attune to others and co-regulate – we are created to live within the context of community and relationship
- How do we shift from a “me” to a “we” mindset?

### **Strategy #4- Maintain Healthy Thought Patterns**

- Avoid the use of all-or-nothing thinking and catastrophizing, and move from “demand language” to “preference language”.
- Set boundaries for TV and media viewing
- When appropriate, use a thought record to help you walk through a thought change process

### **Strategy #5- Engage in Basic Self Care Strategies**

- Functional exercise (regular movement)
- Healthy foods and eating
- Get outside and enjoy nature
- Implement a regular and deliberate practice of gratitude
- Maintain healthy rhythms

### **Resources on Cognitive Styles and Decision-Making**

- Tversky A, Kahneman D. **Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases.** Science 1974;185
- Kahneman D. **Thinking, Fast and Slow.** Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2011.
- Brafman O, Brafman R. **Sway: The Irresistible Pull of Irrational Behavior.** Doubleday, New York, 2008.
- Thaler RH, Sunstein CR. **Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness.** Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2008
- Pink, D. **Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us.** Riverhead Books, New York, 2009
- Poland CM, Poland GA. **Vaccine Education Spectrum Disorder: The Importance of Incorporating Psychological and Cognitive Models into Vaccine Education.** VACCINE; 2011;29:6145-6148.

**Caroline M. Poland, MA, LMHC, LCAC, CCTP, CCFP, NCC** is a licensed mental health counselor, certified clinical trauma professional, and the Founder and CEO of Poland and Associates Consulting. Ms. Poland is the creator of the Preferred Cognitive Styles and Decision-Making Model, which was first discussed in a 2011 article published in *Vaccine*. This model outlines a series of cognitive styles that individuals employ in decision making, and outlines communication strategies that health care providers can use to communicate effectively with that patient to create behavior change – in particular in regards to vaccine acceptance. Ms. Poland brings insights from psychology, mental health, and science to the topics of vaccine hesitancy, decision-making, compassion fatigue and burnout, trauma, establishing trauma informed educational, hospital, and clinical medical settings, sexual assault, emotional regulation, and improving overall health and wellness for flourishing. You can contact her at [caroline@polandandassociates.com](mailto:caroline@polandandassociates.com)