

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19: RECOVERY AND DISCOVERY THROUGH COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION

THE IMPACT ON 'MY LIFE'

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With **EVELINA DZIMANAVICIUTE**

We live in a world filled with change and uncertainty. While some people thrive and grow with challenges, others are struggling to cope under the same circumstances.

Have you ever wondered what makes the difference?

As someone who had to start the new life in a foreign country without even speaking the language, I understand the importance of being able to adapt to whatever life throws at us.

But how do we do that?

We think of ourselves as rational and intelligent human beings, but in reality, most of the time we are driven by subconscious habits, automatic routines and emotional impulses of our much older, reptilian and mammalian parts of the brain.

First reptiles have evolved more than 300 million years ago, and we still have the same neural pathways that govern our fears and survival instincts, followed by the evolution of mammals that shapes our social behaviours and sense of belonging to the group. Our rational, logical neocortex is what distinguishes us from other animals, providing us with the ability to speak, write and invent new things.

The current crisis highlights our sense of what it means to be human, regardless of our national identity, age, race or gender, social status or wealth.

It brings awareness about the basic human needs we share, and how it manifests in crisis. We all have the same fears and hopes, and in this isolated world, we depend on each other much more than ever.

In this situation, it is useful to understand what makes us who we really are, and what drives us beyond our conscious level of awareness.

Throughout evolution, we have developed basic needs that have ensured we got to where we are today.

The S.E.A. of Human Needs:

SAFETY. This is the most basic instinct of our reptilian brain – we are wired to survive, as a primary concern. Throughout millions of years, we were surrounded by life-threatening events several times a day, and our brains primary concern is to keep us safe from harm and danger. In a modern environment, this manifests as

our need for familiarity, repetition and routine, having a home and our own belongings, having clear expectations about what is going to happen, and having a level of control over it.

EVOLUTION. In contrast to the safety, we are also driven about curiosity to explore what's beyond the boundaries of our safe territory, venture into the unknown in search for new resources, learn new skills, explore new possibilities. In the modern world, this translates into our need for novelty, excitement, challenge, improvement and growth, learning something new, engaging in creative work, and our love for travelling.

AFFILIATION. For millions of years, we would have not been able to survive on our own. Therefore, our brain is wired to avoid exclusion at all cost. Many of our modern fears and anxieties (such as fear of public speaking, meeting new people, being judged) are rooted in this evolutionary need to belong. In our working environment, this manifests as the need to be part of the group, sense of belonging and community contribution, being liked, noticed, appreciated, as well as the importance of being needed and valued by others.

While all of those needs are required in our lives, at work people will expect mainly one of them, based on what other needs are being met in their personal lives. This will play a key role in what motivates that person to come to work and perform at their best. For example, a person who has a stable family and home routine will expect more personal challenge at work, while someone who has difficulties at home will want the same role, familiar environment, and mundane tasks at work to fulfil their sense of safety. Someone who doesn't have a social network and close friendships will be more sensitive to discrimination, judgement or unequal treatment.

So what happens to those evolutionary needs when we suddenly end up in the world filled with Covid-19?

- When our sense of safety is compromised, we go to automatic, reptilian survival mode.
- As a result, our responses and behaviours are often irresponsible, impulsive, emotional, and either over-protective or reckless. This is because our rational, logical part of our brain is the most energy-consuming, which we cannot afford if we need to fight imminent danger.
- Our brain cannot tell apart what is real, and what is imagined, so we are switching on our stress response just by thinking about the worst-case scenario, even if we are not in real danger at the moment.
- We become dependent on others and go the extra mile to help and support others. If we are not able to maintain our sense of connection and contribution, this has a detrimental effect on our mental wellbeing.
- We are not able to think creatively, be productive, and learn new things until we have a sense of safety and belonging restored.

Our perception about what is safe and what is dangerous, how much change we can tolerate, and how open we are to novelty and challenge depends on our ability to self-regulate and on our previous experiences that wired our brain for a specific response based on the learnings we take out of new experiences.

How can we increase individual resilience to cope, and restore capacity to learn and innovate?

There are three ways we can calm down our 'reptilian' brain and bring back the balance in our physical and emotional wellbeing:

- 1) Top-down.** This means utilising our top parts of the brain (neocortex) to calm down and regulate lower, more primitive, emotional parts of our brain. It can be done through positive thinking, mindset, visualisations, focusing on what is in our control, mindfulness meditation, having the right facts, knowledge, and positive self-talk.
- 2) Bottom-up.** This means calming down our brain through our body. It is done through physical exercise, adjustments in our posture, our habits, routines, diet and sleep.
- 3) Outside-in.** That is regulating our physical and mental responses through the external environment. It involves having separate space for work and rest, being in nature, listening to music, connecting to other people, surrounding ourselves with positive images and objects that help us to relax, feel connected and inspired.

What will you do to bring safety, meaning, and connection back into your life and business?

It's been a pleasure to share this journey with you!

To your success,



For more information and resources visit my website: EliteMind.co.uk

[Connect with me on LinkedIn](#) if you have any questions, comments, requests.

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