

ESF IMPACT

newsletter



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THAT 'BLAH' YOU FEEL – IT'S LANGUISHING



Languishing captures that 'blah' feeling so many of us are experiencing in the pandemic-response lockdowns. It is an emotional state characterised by a sense of stagnation, lacklustre, emptiness and disconnection. If we visualise mental health as a continuum, languishing sits towards the endpoint of mental illness, but it is not a clinical disorder. It is a term coined by American sociologist and psychologist Corey Keyes that seems so apt in the current environment and is sure to become as popular as pivot, and you are on mute!

ESFs recent Insight Conversation addressed the issue of languishing. **Dr Paula Robinson, CEO and Founder of Applied Positive Psychology Learning Institute** explained that it is a normal feeling in such extraordinary times but there are things we can do to help push us in the direction of mental fitness or 'flourishing', the opposite endpoint of the mental health continuum. Paula provided some practical tips on how to deal with languishing. Most important is a routine of physical movement, time outdoors, and connection with a support person professional or otherwise. She described how to deal with negative thoughts and focus on things within our control. She reminded us that bad times pass and that there are two things that determine mental fitness "how you think and what you do".

Cate Page Executive Director, Clinical Services of Converge International spoke about how languishing has been more evident in EAP clients through lockdowns with people presenting with numerous issues including anger. She explained how important it is to separate out the issues to identify the things you can control. She stressed that in workplaces there needs to be continued structured investment in people through check ins, especially for people working remotely, saying it does not need to come from the manager, but it is so important for everyone to have a safe space to talk through what is happening.



Suzanne Leckie, Organisational Wellbeing Manager at CFA said, volunteers "don't join CFA to go on Zoom, they join to give to the community and for social connection". CFA has instigated a range of strategies for volunteers and staff including introducing the concept of languishing and making it okay to say, "this is a struggle". Online meeting free days and encouraging authentic leadership, so vulnerability is shared at such a difficult time have been welcome and helpful initiatives.

[You can listen to a recording of the Insight Conversation here](#)

REACTIONS

I thought the conversation was a great resource for people who are struggling with their mental health during the perpetual lockdowns. The term 'languishing' captures so well the feeling we are all experiencing now, we can all adopt some of these skills to bring some much needed 'flourishing' in our lives.

Paul Fitzgerald
Psychologist, VicSES

A marvellous session. Three great speakers - whose perspectives provided such wise and practical insight, advice, and hope.

Marie Crozier-Durham
Department of Management
Monash University

The ESF insight conversation provided understanding on how we can differentiate between depression and languishing about and what it looks like to be acting like you have a mental illness and actually having one. It is all about the stories we tell ourselves stories. Therefore, the paradigm shift to focus on telling ourselves stories about how functional we are and how we are actually doing well in our lives, therefore the more we do that the better at that we will become.

I really liked being able to drill down into how to create some of those healthier habits that give us the boost we need and as creatures of habit we need those routines and to put energy into building on these to get through these abnormal times. And as we have heard time and time again....

This too shall pass!"
Gina Mammone
Senior Manager, Peer and Pastoral Care
Wellbeing and Support Services AV