

This Again?

The start of the 2021 school year began under the banner of beautiful fall weather, as well as under continued concern around Covid-19. The Delta variant has caused a return to Covid-19 uncertainty at the start of the school year, and has also ushered the return of a variety of feelings that are familiar and unwelcome to many of us. These feelings include dread, uncertainty, and anxiety around making decisions that are safe for ourselves, our families, and our community.

It is possible and likely that many adults are experiencing what is referred to as a retraumatization, based on events that occurred over the past 18 months around the Covid-19 global pandemic. **Retraumatization** is a conscious or unconscious reminder of a past trauma that results in a re-experiencing of the initial trauma event. Therefore, what many people are experiencing is a level of discomfort or distress that may or may not be directly proportional to our current situation.

With all traumatic experiences, it is important to remember the following practices to promote recovery, resiliency and well-being:

- **Don't isolate yourself.**
- **Seek professional help if needed.**
- **Join a support group or create one of friends and family members.**
- **Face the trauma (don't avoid it) through conversation and verbal or thoughtful processing.**
- **Exercise and spend time outdoors (especially in the beautiful fall weather!)**
- **Listen to your body: rest, eat healthy foods, do things you enjoy.**
- **Get back into your routine.**
- **Meditate, and listen to music you enjoy.**

It is noteworthy and important to recognize that children have not started the schoolyear with the same level of distress as adults. Children have returned to school after relatively typical summer. They likely returned to summer camp activities, saw friends and families, swam at the local pool, and in general had a summer that felt more safe and enjoyable than the previous one. Therefore, the things that they need to maintain that feeling of safety, and support resilience include:

- **Follow a routine (good for both children and adults!).**
- **Providing reassurance about safety when needed, but do not introduce topics that they might not be thinking of, that can be stress-inducing.**
- **Practice compassion and empathy.**
- **Spend time doing activities as a family.**
- **Move your body! Get outside and do something active every day.**

- **Limit screen time.**

If you are seeking mental health support, the Healthy Community Initiative has a comprehensive list of providers in the area:

<https://healthycommunityinitiative.org/resources/categories/mental-health/mental-health-counseling-services/page/3/>

All the best,
Michelle Flannery, Ed.S., NCSP
School Psychologist