



B.C. Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association

MEMBER UPDATE

ReFresh

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**This week is Mental Health Week!**

***Are You Living or Languishing?***

Are you having trouble concentrating? Do you have energy, but still feel somewhat joyless, aimless, and like you're muddling through your days? Perhaps you feel like you're looking at life through a foggy windshield?

You may be languishing. **Languishing** is a sense of stagnation and emptiness that experts have connected to the long haul of the pandemic. It's like a void that sits between depression and flourishing – not a sickness, but more like the absence of well-being.

After the early uncertain days of the pandemic when we were on high alert, we learned strategies to help ease our angst, such as adapting or mitigating our risks. However, as the pandemic drags on, this acute state of anguish has given way to a chronic condition of languish.

People who are languishing:

- Are often not functioning at full capacity;
- Have less motivation;
- Are challenged to focus;
- Have a dwindling drive and a dulled delight; and/or
- Are not depressed, but neither are they thriving.

The term 'languishing' was coined by a sociologist named Corey Keyes. His research suggests that those who are languishing today are three times more likely than their peers to be diagnosed with a major mental health disorder in the future.

Languishing seems to be a slow slipping 'under the surface'. You don't catch yourself slipping slowly into solitude, and are indifferent to your indifference. You may not identify that you are suffering, and do not seek help or do much to change your situation.

### How to Flow Out of Languish

Psychologists suggest one of the best strategies for managing emotions are to name them. For example, the pandemic has made many of us feel grief, certainly for those who have lost loved ones, but also for all of us mourning the loss of normalcy.

So, if someone asks you how you are doing, perhaps be refreshingly candid and say, *"Honestly, I am languishing."*

Adam Grant, the author of [this article](#) we are referencing for this week's ReFresh, says that a concept called **Flow** may be an antidote to languishing. According to Grant, *"Flow is that elusive state of absorption in a meaningful challenge or momentary bond, where your sense of time, place and self melts away."*

### How Do We Flow?

- To be engaged and involved in Flow, you need **uninterrupted time**. Set boundaries when you can be 'all in'.
- **Focus on small goals**, just like cycling an extra kilometer or creating two flower planters on the weekend.
- Flow with activities and tasks that engage your natural talents and strengths.

- **Help others.** Recognize and acknowledge your impact; do not dismiss your efforts as just ‘part of your job’. You make a difference. Feel the progress you help to flow in others.

Your goals should have what Adam Grant calls “just manageable difficulty”: a challenge that stretches your skills and heightens your resolve. Focus on a challenge that matters to you – a project, a goal, or a meaningful connection with someone else. This is a small step in rediscovering some of the energy and enthusiasm you have been missing all these months.

**Setting goals do more than kick start us out of languishing – they also help us thrive:**

- Setting goals triggers new behaviours, guides our focus and helps us sustain momentum in life.
- Creating goals engages the part of our mind that promotes the engagement and attention necessary to recognize the steps and opportunities that help us reach our goals.
- This type of planning directs our attention and keeps us from getting distracted and losing motivation in our quest for what we want in life.
- Just by writing down our specific, small, and meaningful goals, we put them into action and *this pushes us past languishing!*

**Set goals that inspire you.** When you imagine reaching your goal and think about the efforts required to make it a reality, it should make you excited and encouraged — not frazzled or fearful.

**Start small.** One day, you’ll reach the mountain summit and enjoy the sprawling view and beautiful sunrise. But, for now, take a moment to admire the log you stepped over or the stream you crossed. Small yet meaningful steps are more likely to keep us trekking.

*Enjoy the flow!*

*Special thanks to Dan Kenkel, Member from SD 57, for the inspiration behind this week’s ReFresh article.*

Sources:

- [There’s a Name for the Blah You’re Feeling: It’s Called Languishing](#) by Adam Grant

- [\*Why Setting Goals Is Good for You \(Even if You Don't Always Meet Them\)\*](#) by Lindsay Tigar (Real Simple)

If you would like to contribute, or have ideas about what you would like to see in the [ReFresh](#) series, we would love to hear from you: contact [rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca](mailto:rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca).