

Some could experience lasting psychological consequences from COVID-19

Dr. Simon Sherry says extroverts have had a particularly challenging time during the year of lockdowns, isolation and working from home

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With vaccines starting to roll out, there are signs of hope that life could resume some sense of normalcy soon, but COVID-19 could have lasting psychological consequences.

That's according to Dr. Simon Sherry, a professor in Dalhousie University's department of psychology.

"The vast majority of people are resilient, adaptive and resourceful. We will rebound, we'll be okay, but unfortunately a subset of people are probably going to be stuck and seriously impacted by this pandemic," he told NEWS 95.7 fill-in host Jordi Morgan.

He said extroverts have had a particularly challenging time during the year of lockdowns, isolation and working from home.

"They really enjoy social contact ... and there is some evidence to suggest that extroverts struggled to comply more with these COVID-19 measures to have lower social contacts and to stay clear of people," he explained. "That runs counter to their dispositions."

Sherry said prior research has also shown epidemics can result in long-term changes to our societal norms.

"That extroverted tendency to prefer social contact is also associated with transmitting COVID-19," he said. "We've been prescribed isolation and avoidance for more than a year now, and some of those policies and encouragements from parents and teachers will continue. It is likely to make people less extroverted."

The pandemic could also make us both physically and emotionally wary of others.

"The thought is coming out of this pandemic that we may recalibrate the amount of distance that we feel is acceptable between one person and another," said Sherry.

"We're going to be changing a lot of our customs, like from a hug to a handshake. There may be permanent behavioural adaptations."

He said we should be monitoring ourselves for red flags of lingering impacts to our mental health as the pandemic subsides.

Sherry said if your distress seems to be hanging on longer than it is for others, if it seems more severe, or if it's affecting your everyday life, work, school or relationships, it may be time to seek help.

"And if you have that sense of being stuck, along with some of those other factors, it's really important to seek help," Sherry stated.

"Psychology, psychiatry and other helping professions have tools, tips, strategies and medications that can absolutely be helpful in the alleviation of depression, anxiety and stress or a range of other difficulties brought on by this pandemic."

Nova Scotia's Mental Health Crisis Line is available 24/7 by calling toll-free 1-888-429-8167. Kids Help Phone counsellors can be reached at 1-800-668-6868.

Canadians can also access immediate, free and confidential mental health and substance use supports, 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the [Wellness Together Canada](#) online portal