



“There’s a Name for the Blah You’re Feeling: It’s Called Languishing” Adam Grant. NY Times 4/19/2021 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/19/well/mind/covid-mental-health-languishing.html>

**Highlights of this NYT article: What languishing is and why you want to notice it.**

- **“Languishing is a sense of stagnation and emptiness. It feels as if you’re muddling through your days, looking at your life through a foggy windshield.** And it might be the dominant emotion of 2021. Languishing is the neglected middle child of mental health. It’s the void between depression and flourishing — the [absence of well-being](#). You don’t have symptoms of mental illness, but you’re not the picture of mental health either.
- **You’re not functioning at full capacity.** Languishing dulls your motivation, disrupts your ability to focus, and [triples](#) the odds that you’ll cut back on work. It appears to be [more common](#) than major depression — and in some ways it may be a bigger risk factor for [mental illness](#). The term was coined by a sociologist named Corey Keyes, who was struck that many people who weren’t depressed also weren’t thriving.
- Part of the danger is that when you’re languishing, you might not notice the dulling of delight or the dwindling of drive. You don’t catch yourself slipping slowly into solitude; you’re indifferent to your indifference. **When you can’t see your own suffering, you don’t seek help or even do much to help yourself.”**

**Strategies: “Finding new challenges, enjoyable experiences and meaningful work are all possible remedies to languishing.** By acknowledging that so many of us are languishing, we can start giving voice to quiet despair and lighting a path out of the void.”

1. **“Name this emotion** as feeling a state of languish. Psychologists [find](#) that one of the best strategies for managing emotions is to name them.”
2. **We are not alone:** Normalize your emotions as human, not as a failure. Naming the emotion and talking about it “reminds us that we aren’t alone: languishing is common and shared.”
3. **“A concept called “flow” may be an antidote to languishing.** Flow is that elusive state of [absorption](#) in a meaningful challenge or a momentary bond, where your sense of time, place and self melts away. During the early days of the pandemic, the best predictor of well-being wasn’t optimism or mindfulness — it was [flow](#). People who became more immersed in their projects managed to avoid languishing and maintained their pre-pandemic happiness. An early-morning word game catapults me into [flow](#). A late-night Netflix binge sometimes does the trick too — it transports you into a story where you feel attached to the characters and concerned for their welfare.”
4. **“Focus on a small goal** The pandemic was a big loss. To transcend languishing, try starting with [small wins](#), like the tiny triumph of figuring out a whodunit or the rush of playing a seven-letter word. One of the clearest paths to flow is a [just-manageable difficulty](#): a challenge that stretches your skills and heightens your resolve. That means carving out daily time to focus on a challenge that matters to you — an interesting project, a worthwhile goal, a meaningful conversation. Sometimes it’s a small step toward rediscovering some of the energy and enthusiasm that you’ve missed during all these months.”
5. **Give yourself some uninterrupted time.** Fragmented attention is an enemy of engagement and excellence. That means we need to set boundaries. Block off time for yourself, time to attend to others, time away from screens, time for projects and flow.

*Adam Grant is an organizational psychologist at Wharton, the author of “Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don’t Know” and the host of the TED podcast WorkLife.*