

# Are you being left to languish in 2021?

Not quite yourself this year?  
Don't worry you're far from alone

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Feeling aimless, flat and a bit “meh?” Chances are, you're languishing.

A renowned American psychologist has given a name to the way so many people are feeling more than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, and it has already been dubbed both the buzzword and the “dominant emotion” of 2021.

Harvard University organisational psychologist and best-selling author Adam Grant describes languishing as a sense of stagnation, and emptiness, and feeling like “you're muddling through your days, looking at your life through a foggy windscreen”.

“Languishing is the neglected middle child of mental health,” he wrote in the New York Times.

“It's the void between depression and flourishing — the absence of wellbeing.

“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.”

Professor Grant suggests languishing represents the

next big mental health crisis, partly because it is a hidden epidemic.

Sociologist Corey Keyes, who coined the term, warned the people most likely to suffer from major depression and anxiety disorders in the next decade were those who were languishing today.

Professor Grant said naming the feeling was the first step towards addressing it, and also provided a socially acceptable response to the question, “How are you?”

“When you add languishing to your lexicon, you start to notice it all around you. It shows up when you feel let down by your short afternoon walk. It's in your kids' voices when you ask how online school went. It's in The Simpsons every time a character says, ‘Meh,’” he said.

He also suggests striving for flow — a state of mind in which someone is fully immersed in what they are doing — as an antidote to languishing.

Australian psychologist Amy Silver described languishing as a slow creep.

“If we label it, we can move into the position of doing something about it, so it is useful to have a word we can identify with,” she said.

“But the danger is, (lan-

guishing) is a slow creep and one we might not actually identify until it becomes habitual. There may not be impetus to change it, because life is manageable.”

Dr Silver said as the world slowly returned to “normal” most people who had been languishing would start to re-engage with life. Those who didn't were at risk of clinical diagnoses such as depression.

“We do not know the statistics on the impact of this year in terms of mental health, but we can fully predict it's going to be catastrophic,” she said.

Perth nutrition and lifestyle coach Sarah Hopkins helps clients make changes to their lifestyle and mental and physical wellbeing. She has witnessed a rise in languishing, or as she preferred to call it, apathy.

“It's a really commonly expressed experience, and it has got worse over the past 17 months, definitely,” she said. “And because of that, there has been a lapse in self care.”

Ms Hopkins, pictured, said the biggest theme emerging from her clients, who were mostly women, was a cycle of poor choices, including drinking too much alcohol, which led to poor sleep quality and diet.



## Fraudster to learn his fate

Disgraced bureaucrat Paul Whyte is inching closer to learning how long he will spend behind bars as his lawyer works to resolve the last of the more than 500 charges against him.

The former Department of Communities executive, pictured, is accused of being at the centre of WA's biggest public sector theft



defrauding the agency of more than \$22 million through a fake invoicing scheme.

He appeared in Perth Magistrate's Court yesterday by video link from Hakea Prison charged with 551 counts of corruption and two counts of money or property laundering, having already pleaded guilty to most of them. He will return to court on May 27.

## Diabetes sufferers big dementia risk

Developing diabetes in middle age doubles your risk of getting dementia by the age of 70, a major study has revealed.

Researchers looked at the link between dementia and type 2 diabetes, which affects more than a million Australians.

They found the earlier individuals develop the condition, caused by poor diet and obesity, the greater their risk of dementia in old age. The findings add to evidence hundreds of thou-

sands of middle-aged Aussies could ward off dementia if they adopt a healthier lifestyle now.

The study looked at data from more than 10,000 people, who had their health monitored for 31 years. They were twice as likely to have dementia at the age of 70 if they had been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes before the age of 60.

Those diagnosed with diabetes between the age of 60 and 64 had a 50 per cent higher risk

of dementia. Meanwhile, those who got diabetes in their late 60s were 10 per cent more likely to develop severe memory loss by the age of 70. “Every five-year earlier onset of diabetes was significantly associated with a 25 per cent higher risk of dementia,” the University of Paris researchers said.

The study, published in journal JAMA, concluded diabetes likely caused more than one per cent of Aussie dementia cases.