

COPING WITH COVID-19: HELPING HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES

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DISCLOSURES

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IN THE COURSE OF ROUTINE PRACTICE, PHYSICIANS AND OTHER HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS
ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS FOR WHICH YOU ARE ABLE TO APPLY PROCEDURES AND TREATMENTS
THAT ARE KNOWN TO BE GENERALLY EFFECTIVE

NOW, YOU ARE THRUST INTO AN UNPRECEDENTED SITUATION OF CARING FOR AN
OVERWHELMING NUMBER OF PATIENTS FOR WHOM NO SPECIFIC EFFECTIVE TREATMENT EXISTS,
AS YET

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

REGARDLESS OF HOW HEALTHY OR WELL ADJUSTED YOU ARE, THE EXPERIENCE OF STRESS,
ANXIETY AND OTHER EMOTIONS MAY EMERGE



UNIQUE TO YOU

WE ARE EXPOSED TO PATIENTS' RESPIRATORY TRACK IN EXTREME CLOSE UP PROXIMITY ON A DAILY BASIS. WE DON'T HAVE ANY INCLINATION OF WHICH PATIENT MIGHT BE CORONAVIRUS INFECTED. AND, WE ARE EXPECTED (TO) PROVIDE INTUBATION SERVICES TO PATIENTS IN THE HOSPITAL WITH RESPIRATORY DISTRESS, BUT THE PPE PROVISIONS AND PROTOCOL ARE TOTALLY INADEQUATE.

I THINK MOST ANESTHESIOLOGISTS ARE FEELING THE SAME WAY--- WE PRETTY MUCH THINK WE ARE ALL GOING TO GET INFECTED (THE HOSPITAL WILL STILL EXPECT US TO CONTINUE TO WORK UNLESS WE ARE SEVERELY ILL). WE JUST DON'T KNOW WHEN AND HOPEFULLY WE'LL SURVIVE THE VIRUS WITHOUT SEVERELY IMPACTING NEGATIVELY TO OUR FAMILY.

Yi-Hwa Outerbridge MD
Anesthesiologist in Tampa, Florida
April 7, 2020

HOW YOUR WORK HAS CHANGED

- You're not unaccustomed to loss of life and managing the pain of others
- The scale of this pandemic is overwhelming and unique
- All at once, you're helping extraordinary numbers of patients manage their anxiety and health status, and for dying patients, connecting them to their families for the last time, or being alone with them as they die
- And, the same level of support and resources that you are used to are not readily available
- For many, training plans or responsibilities have been significantly altered
- At this time, all of your work is likely highly intense and involves non-stop critical care

TAKING STOCK...

- *To check in with yourself about how all of this is affecting you*
- **Surroundings:** Changes to the OR, ICU, offices, corridors, etc impact your work. Do you have new responsibilities & tasks? Are you in an unfamiliar setting? On for hours or days on end? Can you get away & get home for breaks?
- **Emotions:** How has your attitude changed? Are you feeling irritable? Fatigued? Anxious? Angry? Sad?
- **Physical Sensations:** How much are you experiencing thirst, fatigue, nausea, numbing, muscle tension, headaches, tightness in the chest?
- **Behavior:** Are you withdrawing from others, unable to rest, or agitated? Are you taking on too much, and not giving yourself breaks?

CHANGES IN YOUR LIFESTYLE

- What are the things we've taken out of our everyday lives that may be uniquely related to this period of the pandemic? Changes in these areas may impact your internal resources for coping and resilience

Movement

**Social
Support**

**Separation
between
work and
home**

CHANGES: MOVEMENT

- It's easy to forget how much we move during a typical day (e.g., walking down subway stairs, to meetings, going to the gym, walks to Coogan's)
- For a lot of you the most movement you're doing now is walking in narrow alleyways between makeshift and cramped ICU rooms
- Limited mobility = feeling much more confined and physically fatigued & stiff
- Loss of time for exercise, outings, and recreation can impact our mood and stress tolerance



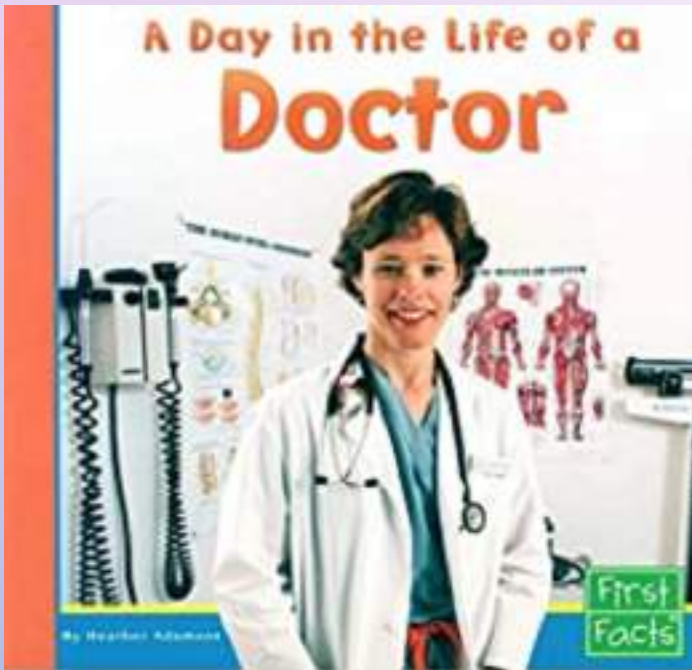
CHANGES: SOCIAL SUPPORT AT WORK

- At CUIMC, we're used to getting support & debriefing for difficult cases and deaths
 - Inordinate number of critically ill patients and patient deaths = little time to process
- Without physically having colleagues close it can feel like we're dealing with everything alone
- But, if we are working in tight spaces, we could also feel too closed in and unable to connect with others
- As everyone is dealing with similar emotions and challenges, this may add to hesitancy to ask for support when needed

CHANGES: SOCIAL SUPPORT AT HOME

- Many of us are used to getting emotional support from friends and loved ones
- This is especially challenging when you have extended shifts with no breaks
- Not everyone has a partner or spouse to talk to and process their experience
- Demands of parenting, partnering, or giving care & support to other relatives & friends may overshadow your need to take care of yourself
- Arrange time with friends or family for (even) brief check ins via apps and manage expectations....these calls need to be respectful of your time & work burden

CHANGES: SEPARATION BETWEEN WORK AND HOME



- We no longer have that built in separation between our work and our home life
 - Need to take time to settle in & check out of work/home
 - Providing telehealth & work from home may increase feelings of isolation and stress
 - For some, isolating from your families to prevent spread of COVID19 means difficult separations & loss of time/events
- Try to set aside a specific room & time for telehealth sessions at home
- Set "work hours" & leave time for breaks
- Set schedules for time with your kids and do use treats for reinforcers!

IMPORTANCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY

- Key concept for being able to continuously adapt under stressful experiences
- Refers to a number of dynamic processes that unfold over time, related to how an individual (1) adapts to fluctuating situational demands, (2) reconfigures mental resources, (3) shifts perspective, and (4) balances competing desires, needs, and life domains.
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY** IS THE ABILITY TO STAY IN CONTACT WITH THE PRESENT MOMENT REGARDLESS OF UNPLEASANT THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND BODILY SENSATIONS, WHILE CHOOSING ONE'S BEHAVIORS BASED ON THE SITUATION AND PERSONAL VALUES.

REMINDE YOURSELF

- It's not selfish to take breaks
- The needs of your patients are not more important than your own needs
- Working non-stop can put you at higher risk for stress and exhaustion
- You may need to give yourself more time to step back and recover from incidents or series of events, long shifts or extended coverage on the unit
 - And your work may feel more emotionally draining than usual because you're vulnerable to infection



Adapted from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



MANAGING YOUR STRESS

- SOOTHE YOURSELF
 - MEDITATE, PRAY
 - DEEP & SLOW BREATHING
 - RELAXATION EXERCISES
 - YOGA, MINDFULNESS
 - STRETCHING
- HYDRATE & EAT HEALTHY WHEN YOU CAN
- EXERCISE
- GET SOME REST AND WHEN YOU CAN, SUFFICIENT SLEEP
- AVOID EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL INTAKE
- REACH OUT TO OTHERS
- DON'T MAKE DECISIONS NOW THAT RESULT IN MAJOR LIFE CHANGES
- ASK FOR ASSISTANCE & DELEGATE
- TURN OFF THE NEWS....LIMIT HOW MUCH AND WHO YOU WATCH
- GO OUTDOORS!



HELP YOUR LOVED ONES & LET THEM HELP YOU

- Ask them to listen, and let you talk if you want to or not talk about work
- As the expert, you will be looked to for updates and answers about COVID --- set limits and structure this as you need to
- Ask for time doing relaxing, productive & enjoyable activity, even when this has to be done remotely
- When you are stressed, ask for what you need, including time alone—especially important for kids to hear that you are not upset with them
- Explain to your kids in an age-appropriate way the reason for your change in work routine & address their concerns about the virus and safety
- Give kids something constructive to do to help:
 - Send cards/pictures to patients
 - Help you by pitching in at home or doing a relaxing activity together



From Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

RESILIENCE

- SOMETIMES IS THOUGHT OF AS RETURNING TO THE WAY YOU WERE BEFORE A STRESSFUL OR LIFE ALTERING EVENT
- HERE WE REFER TO IT AS USING YOUR COPING RESOURCES, CONNECTING TO OTHERS, AND CULTIVATING YOUR VALUES AND PURPOSE IN LIFE AS YOU RIDE THROUGH THIS TIME OF STRESS
- YOU ARE AWARE OF THE TIME IT TAKES TO DEVELOP AND TEST FOR TREATMENT AND VACCINE EFFICACY, AND TO THEN ROLL OUT THESE INTERVENTIONS, SO YOU DO KNOW THERE WILL BE AN END TO THIS
- WHILE YOU WON'T FORGET THIS TIME, FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL, YOUR POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS, REMIND YOURSELF OF YOUR PURPOSE, AND PRACTICE GRATITUDE FOR WHAT YOU ARE THANKFUL FOR IN YOUR LIFE

I CANNOT CONTROL

(So, I can LET GO of these things.)

IF OTHERS
FOLLOW THE
RULES OF SOCIAL
DISTANCING

THE AMOUNT
OF TOILET
PAPER AT THE
STORE

I CAN CONTROL

(So, I will focus on these things.)

THE
ACTIONS
OF
OTHERS

MY POSITIVE
ATTITUDE

TURNING
OFF THE
NEWS

FINDING FUN
THINGS TO DO
AT HOME

HOW
LONG
THIS
WILL
LAST

HOW I FOLLOW CDC
RECOMMENDATIONS

LIMITING MY
SOCIAL MEDIA

PREDICTING
WHAT WILL
HAPPEN

MY OWN SOCIAL
DISTANCING

MY KINDNESS &
GRACE

HOW
OTHERS
REACT

OTHER
PEOPLE'S
MOTIVES

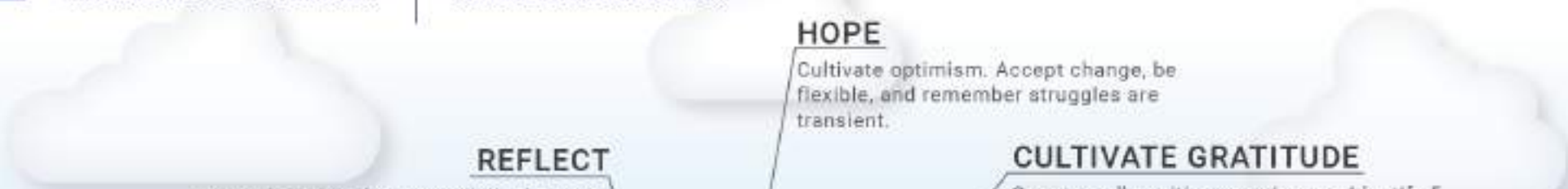


THE LONG VIEW



There is no faster
way to healing,
than knowing that
all feelings are
safe to be felt.

@musingsfromthemoon



HOPE

Cultivate optimism. Accept change, be flexible, and remember struggles are transient.

CULTIVATE GRATITUDE

Savor small positive experiences. Identify 5 things daily for which you are grateful.

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

Do what centers you. Breathe, meditate, get outside, use your 5 senses to ground yourself. Be aware of unhelpful thought patterns. Redirect rumination to problem solving.

BE FLEXIBLE

Practice flexibility of mind and behavior by noticing and accepting changes in circumstances and forging novel and creative paths forward.

FORGIVE

Be generous with yourself and others. Difficulties present opportunities for growth, self-discovery, and learning. Be realistic with your expectations.

REFLECT

Journal to identify coping skills that were effective in the past. Find meaning in this event and purpose in your role in it.

CONNECT

Invest meaningfully in your relationships. Practice vulnerability and seek support from trustworthy and compassionate individuals.

LIVE YOUR VALUES

Remind yourself what is truly important to you, and let that guide your actions. What is one small way you can live your values today?

ENGAGE IN SELF CARE

Check in with yourself. Are you getting your basic needs met? Do one pleasurable activity every day.

GROWING RESILIENCE

Tips to Weather Harsh Seasons

Anna E. Allmann, Ph.D

Research indicates that stressors and adverse life events pose challenges for many people's mental health. Resilience is a set of traits and skills individuals use to adapt and even thrive during adversity. Growth mindset suggests that with practice, people can grow in resilience. Here are 9 evidence-based methods to improve your coping strategies now.

REACH OUT

THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY IS OFFERING:

- **PEER SUPPORT GROUPS**

- PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT SESSION WITH TWO PSYCHIATRY FACULTY FACILITATING
- 30 MIN
- FOCUS ON ENHANCING RESILIENCE AND ADAPTING COPING

- **1:1 PEER SUPPORT WITH PSYCHIATRY FACULTY**

- SIMILAR PURPOSE AS THE SUPPORT GROUPS, BUT IN A VIRTUAL 1:1 FORMAT.
- ANY FACULTY OR HOUSE STAFF CAN CALL AND THEY ARE CONNECTED IN REAL TIME TO ONE OF THE PSYCHIATRY FACULTY.
 - **TO ACCESS CALL: 646-774-5366**
 - **MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY – 11 AM-2PM**
 - **TUESDAY, THURSDAY – 3PM-6PM**
 - **SATURDAY – 2PM-5PM**
- TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OR ACCESS THESE SERVICES, PLEASE CALL DR. LOU BAPTISTA'S OFFICE AT 646-774-5366 OR
- EMAIL DR. CLAUDE MELLINS AT CAM14@CUMCC.COLUMBIA.EDU OR DR. LAUREL MAYER AT LSM16@CUMC.COLUMBIA.EDU

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Mindfulness and meditation:** Headspace Calm, Insight Timer
- **Cognitive Behavioral Strategies:** MindShift
[HTTPS://WWW.ANXIETYPANADA.COM/RESOURCES/MINDS
HIFT-CBT/](https://www.anxietycanada.com/resources/mindshift-cbt/)
- **Exercise:** Fitness Blender
<https://www.youtube.com/user/FitnessBlender>
- **Daily Mood Ratings:** Daylio, iMoodJournal

Each individual will have their own, unique way of responding.

Being *flexible* is key---flexibility in thinking, in your routines, in allowing yourself to feel