

To All Community Members,

With the increasing concerns regarding the coronavirus we are entering a surreal period of anxiety and uncertainty. It is likely that you are experiencing stressors in multiple areas of your life, all at once: work, family, financially, community. For each one of us, individually, such stress can trigger strong emotions, or even cause the re-experiencing of past traumas. Some might feel a temptation to relapse into old negative patterns, or to neglect oneself. Many who are parents or caregivers have a tendency to sacrifice their own interests in order to help others. However, that may not be the lesson that the coronavirus is here to teach us. More than ever there is a need for us to care for ourselves, as well as a need to care for each other.

We are reminded of the airline steward who advises us that if the plane had an emergency, and the air masks drop for the passengers, that we are to put on our own mask first, then assist those who depend on us. We all are bound to each other in this way, and as such it is not selfish, but an act of concern, to factor our own needs into the equation.

Here are some ideas for coping:

1. Remember the basics. Your physical needs may seem a lower priority in times of trouble, and yet, especially when confronted by a disease, it makes sense to watch your diet, exercise in a safe way, drink lots of water, and be out in the sun when possible. Get lots of sleep. Make these things a priority.
2. Stay connected, and not just with medical providers if you or someone you love becomes ill, but through other creative ways that follows guidelines and recommendations. Though it is important for us to enjoy each other from afar, there may be a cost to “social distancing”, which might result in a sense of isolation. While limiting face to face contact is needed in this crisis, it certainly can have a cost spiritually. To help with this, make an effort to call your friends or video chat with distant family. Use this time to show love to others and let them show love to you.
3. Breathe.
4. Learn something new. Practice a craft that you otherwise have not had time for. Study something that interests you.
5. Be in nature. Plant a garden, or a tree. Despite all that distracts us, springtime is here.
6. If you are a person of faith, make yours a daily practice. Every crisis can be conceived of as a spiritual crisis, which challenges our ability to tell ourselves that we will be okay. Faith reminds us that there is a power greater than ourselves, a plan beyond our understanding. It encourages us to let go of what we cannot control, and to use the energy that we save to reduce suffering in the world. Including our own.
7. The importance of spiritual fitness. Joe Martineau reminds us of how making time to be spiritually fit through smudging and prayer/meditation can help with our spiritual fitness and will result in helping us cope with the changes in daily life. Encourage yourself and others to address this opportunity to become more spiritually fit through ways such as connecting by using your own language. Through this, Joe reminds us that this can help honor the spiritual confusion and pain we may feel during outbreaks such as this one.

Such events may create emotions such as fear and anxiety, and through our ability to connect/reconnect to our spiritual ways, we can reduce these feelings.