

Oregon ACP: CARING For You

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Health care workers in all disciplines and venues of care are facing unprecedented challenges as they respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many report intense feelings of powerlessness or lack of control and describe a sense of moral distress as they navigate issues that may conflict with their professional values. These feelings can last long beyond the event(s) that originally caused distress.



Ira Bedzow, PhD, Director of the Biomedical Ethics and Humanities Program at New York Medical College and Senior Scholar at the Aspen Center for Social Values, offers this framework for examining and reducing moral distress. Please visit the Center To Advance Palliative Care (CAPC) at this link to learn more: <https://www.capc.org/documents/download/853/>

Photo: M. Olhausen

The THREE-QUESTIONS FRAMEWORK:

1. What am I experiencing? Name the feeling.

2. What do I want to do with it? Depending on whether the experience is tied to the past, present, or future, consider if what you want to change is A) your actions. B) the results of previous actions. C) how you think or feel your actions/options.

3. How can I approach it? It can be helpful to consider all the options available, starting with extremes and then working towards more balanced approaches. Then assess how these options fit with your personal and professional capabilities and limitations, as well as organizational or environmental factors.

“Before COVID-19, health care providers had certain expectations about the quality and outcomes of the care they provided. COVID-19 has changed the environment. If clinicians and administrators do not change their expectations to match the realities of the current environment, they will automatically feel as if they have failed. This feeling of failure will stick with them longer than any sense of success that they have had.”

Making you aware of realistic expectations: What you are experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic differs from prior situations; therefore, previous expectations about behaviors and outcomes may be unrealistic for now. Recognizing this can reduce distress by allowing you to focus on more achievable decisions and/or outcomes – preventing the feeling that you are falling short.

Making you aware of more and better options: You are no longer stuck in a dilemma of choosing two bad choices or an “all or nothing” approach. You can identify many different options for what might be possible. This provides hope and an opportunity to act on your values, rather than feeling locked in an untenable situation.

As so often happened in his role as a physician, he had to fight against feelings of terrible impotence that overcame him when he was forced to confront how limited the resources of his science were and how immense man's suffering.

~Isabel Allende



Wild Geese
*You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees for
a hundred miles through the desert
repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your
body love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell
you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of
the rain are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees, the
mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean
blue air, are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the
world offers itself to your imagination, calls
to you like the wild geese, harsh and
exciting over and over announcing your
place in the family of things.*
~Mary Oliver

Photo: M. Olhausen

We shape clay into a pot, but it is the emptiness inside that holds whatever we want.
~Tao Te Ching

Three grand essentials to happiness in this life are something to do, something to love, and something to hope for.
~Joseph Addison

One of the secrets of a happy life is continuous small treats.
~Iris Murdoch



Success
*To laugh often and much;
To win the respect of intelligent people, and
the affection of children;
To earn the appreciation of honest critics, and
endure the betrayal of false friends;
To appreciate beauty;
To find the best in others;
To leave the world a bit better, whether by a
healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed
social condition;
To know even one life has breathed easier
because you have lived.
This is to have succeeded."*
~Ralph Waldo Emerson

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