

Leading in a Time of Crisis: Supporting Mental Wellness in Self and Others



Douglas W Walker, PhD
Chief Programs Director
Mercy Family Center
New Orleans

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“The normal is not easy now”

Nurse Manager
Emergency Department
Washington, Missouri
April 7, 2020



The Unique Signature of Pandemics

- Unlike other types of disasters, pandemics are universal and a shared (and unique) world-wide experience
- Universal experience and threat does not allow for outside resources – all are threatened and taxed
- Because the Coronavirus cannot be seen it creates can create much more uncertainty and fear than other types of disasters

- Remove barriers, keep it simple, accept “good” and give yourself permission to let go of “great”
- Routine = Predictability = Sense of Control = Calm
- Provide regular and easily consumable information
- Provide culturally appropriate resources (education, mental wellness, occupational, economic)
- When appropriate, measure and monitor wellbeing



What to expect during a crisis like this (students, families, faculty, staff, peers)

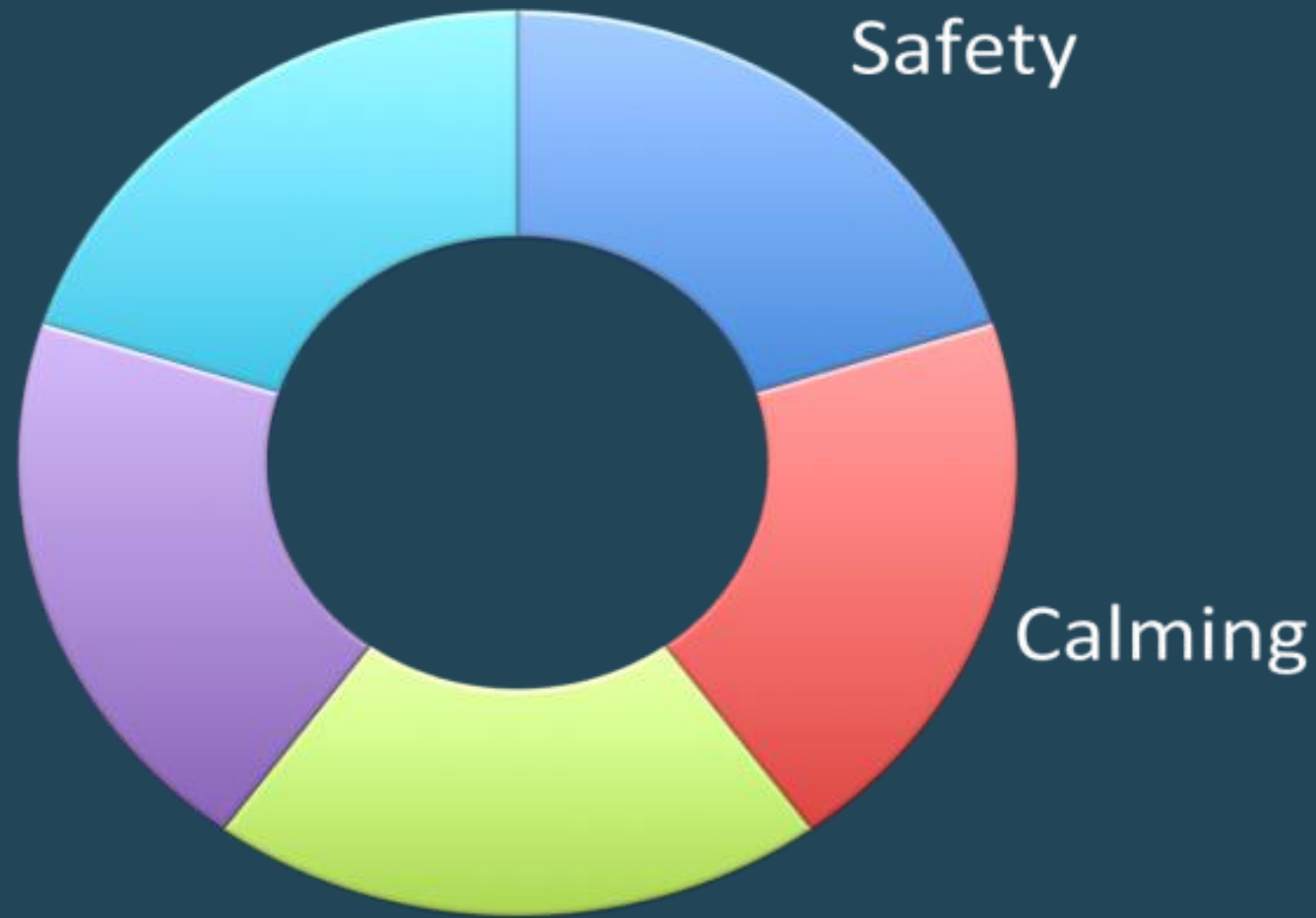
- Over the next few weeks and months fear and uncertainty will change the way that individuals normally behave (e.g., communicate, cope, make decisions).
- These are expected reactions to a very extraordinary situation.
- In later stages, fear and uncertainty will fade – and grief, loss, lack of closure and guilt will be major underlying themes.

What to expect in yourself during a crisis like this

- You play an important role in establishing order, predictability, and direction.
- Establishing your own sense of calm, focus, and self-assurance can play a significant role in alleviating the stress of those you work with.
- Goal is to reinforce confidence in yourself and in others.
- We are all in uncharted waters, when in doubt seek peer support and advice.

Five Empirically-Supported Intervention Principles After Large-Scale Disasters





Vital Elements of Leadership Communication

Safety



Rational



Clear, concise, accurate and timely communication increases predictability, a sense of control and safety in others.

Messaging



Questions:

- How has the outbreak affected your sense of safety?
- What helps, or could help?

Statements:

- We are committed to our communities' health and wellbeing
- Here is what we're doing to keep you all safe

Actions:

- Give your best understanding of timelines and advise of any variables



Calming

Rational



Expressing a sense of calm, and instilling it in others supports mental, emotional and physical stability in the face of adversity.

Messaging



Questions:

- How are you doing? How are you sleeping, connecting,...
- What do you need, how can we help?

Statements:

- There are no set rules for working through something like this
- Be patient with yourself

Actions:

- Allow your community members the time and space to share their experience
- Create space for more focused self-care conversation through smaller special interest groups (e.g., HS Teachers, counselors, HOS)



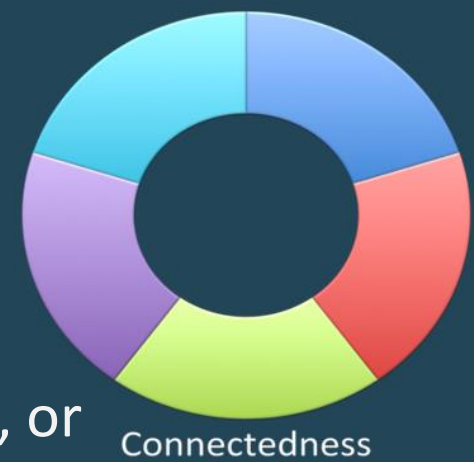
Connectedness

Rational



Bearing witness to each others devotion to education helps satisfy our basic human need for connection.

Messaging



Questions:

- What is the impact on how you talk with each other, work morale, or connecting with family or friends?
- Does anyone here feel the need for practical support?

Statements:

- We'll make it through this together
- Talk when you need to, be available to listen

Actions:

- Encourage co-workers to stay connected
- Facilitate community engagement and gratitude

Break for Discussion

Self &
Community
Efficacy



Rational

Self &
Community
Efficacy



Reinforcing confidence in your community reminds them that they are valued, and they have what it takes to get through this.

Messaging

Self &
Community
Efficacy



Questions:

- Has there been any change in your confidence, in your ability to do your job?
- What do you need to do your job; to maintain your confidence?

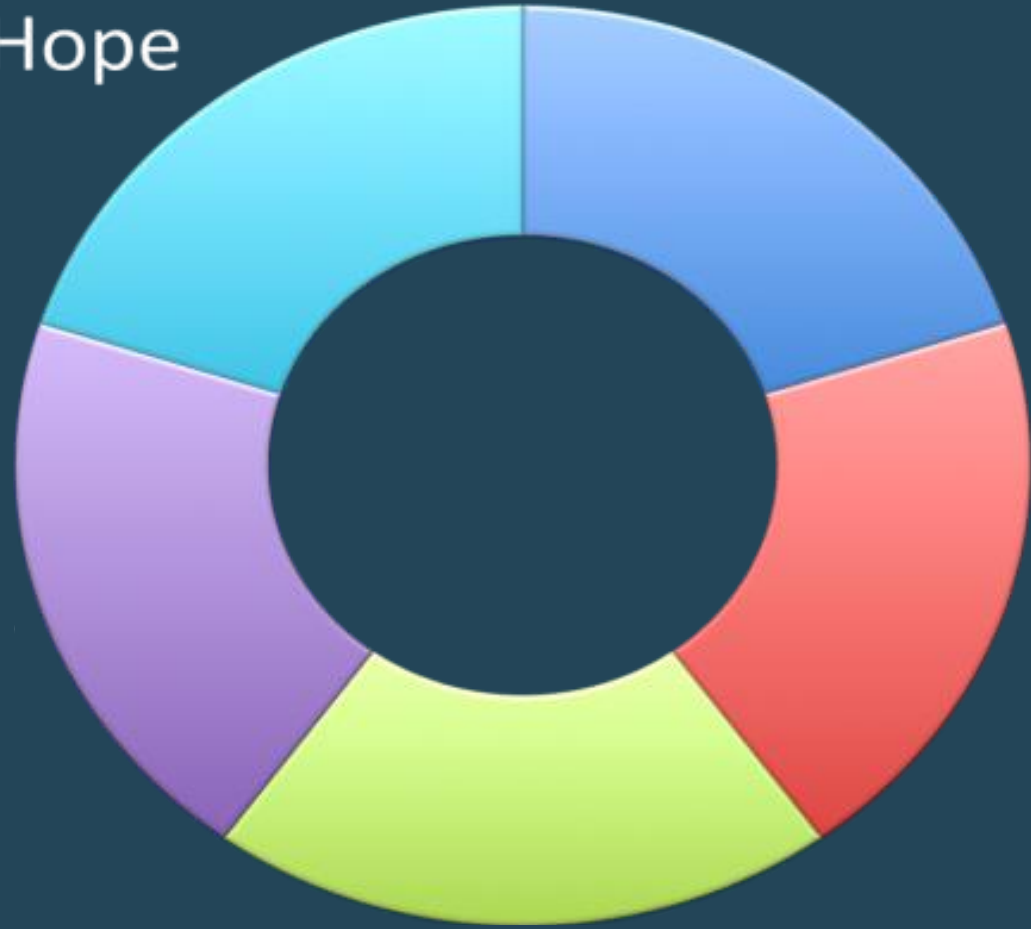
Statements:

- One hour, one day at a time
- You are not an imposter. You are competent and you've "Got this"

Actions:

- Check in with co-workers regularly; share optimism
- When appropriate, use humor to dissolve high pressure situations

Hope



Rational

Hope



We hold on to the idea that things will be better.

We seek out signs of hope in our every day life.

Messaging



Questions:

- How is this experience creating deeper connections (with others, sense of purpose, vocation/career, higher power)?

Statements:

- What we are living is a life changing experience
- Finding meaning in these challenging times can be difficult

Actions:

- Acknowledge and identify shifts in co-worker perspectives of their relationships with others, purpose, etc.

Compassion Fatigue

“The weariness that comes from caring.”

(Johnson, 1997)

Intense connection with those you help



Frustration & irritability



Reactions similar to PTSD



Feelings of inadequacy & low self-esteem



Problems with concentration



Increased physical complaints

Self-Care

Knowing what to do is not the challenge;
making the time is

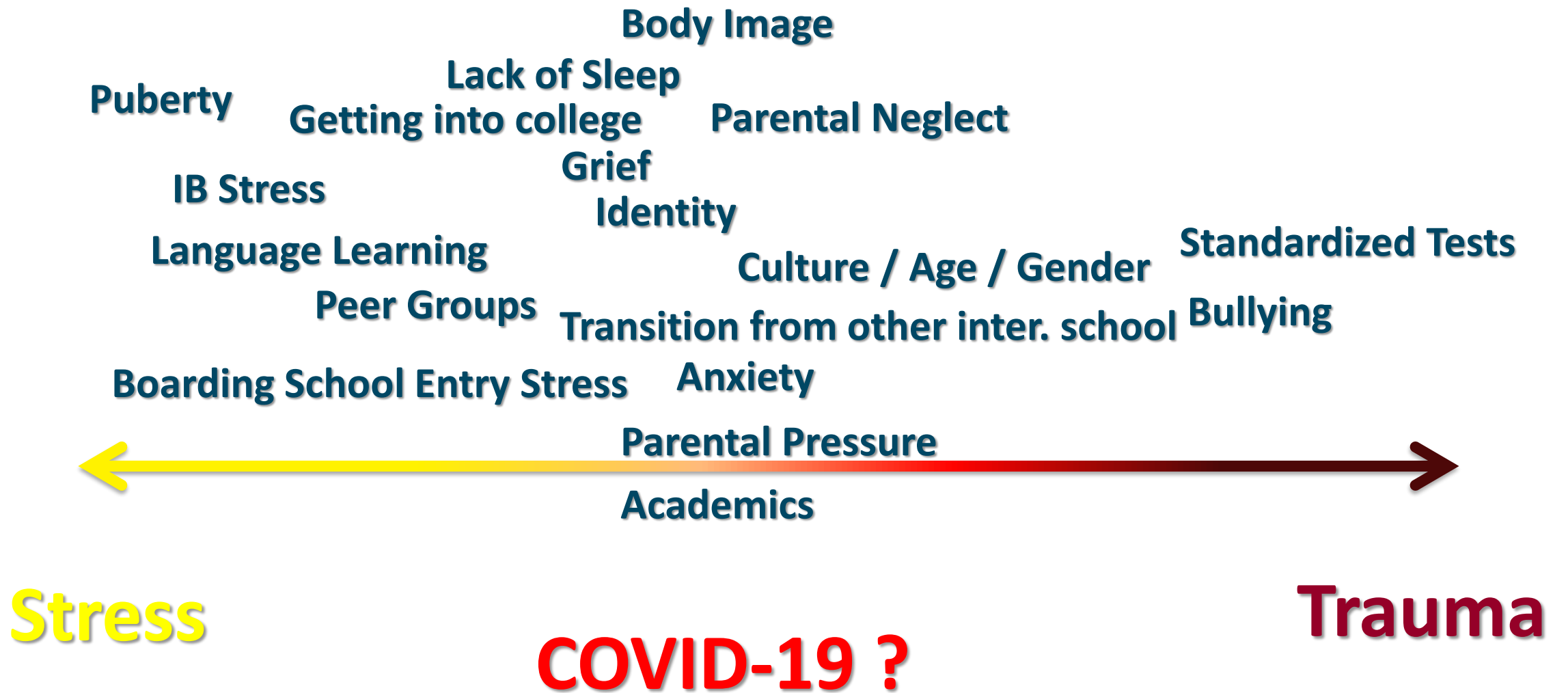
Who

Get Beyond "I'm Fine."

On a regular basis, ask yourself and those around you how things are going with these five aspects of life. It's an easy and effective way to keep tabs on your mental wellness.







Break for Discussion

Douglas W Walker, PhD



E dwallacewalker@yahoo.com
douglas.walker@mercy.net

M +1 504 388 5502
Twitter: @DouglasWWalker
Skype: dwallacewalker

308 Girod Street
Mandeville
Louisiana
70448
USA