A message from Dr. Peter Yellowlees, Chief Wellness Officer

How to thrive while “sheltering” at home

Thank you to all for everything you are doing for our patients, our families, our colleagues and our community. Reports of selfless gestures, both big and small, from the UC Davis team continue to demonstrate unwavering commitment to the people we serve, our families, our colleagues and our broader community. Caring for each other as well as our patients during these difficult weeks can be incredibly hard at times but is paying off in many ways. Flattening the curve is working and California residents are showing the way nationally with our efforts to physically distance, while keeping socially connected. We are all in this together.

Working frequently from home myself where I am able to see my patients via video visits has left my two dogs, Riley and Mick, confused but happy. They most likely would like this to go on forever! There are some good things that are coming out of our need to “shelter in place.” And this week I thought I would talk about these hopeful or more positive aspects of this pandemic. To a certain extent I am following up Patricia Tanrioger’s wonderful piece published in the UC Davis Health Friday Update on April 10. Patricia wrote an exceptional and sensitive description of her ways of coping while she works at home, which if you missed it, is HERE. Do please re-read what she wrote.

It has been very striking when I talk with many of our wonderful staff – physicians, nurses, pharmacists, Environmental Services staff, administrators, therapists of all varieties and others. The amount of effort and personal sacrifice that many of you have put in to help us as a community is truly an inspiration. One significant challenge as we all aim to protect our patients and ourselves also includes efforts to protect our families and loved ones. Some have chosen...
to either live separately from loved ones or have made physical changes to live safely with them. The significant changes forced upon us from this particular virus have not only added stress but have also led to people finding many alternative ways to cope.

So, what should we be doing to thrive in our current crisis?

We all know about physical distancing and excellent hygiene. They go without saying. We also know about good communication, increased online social connecting, and the importance of routine and schedules. But many other issues are also important, and give us an opportunity to thrive, not just survive, while we work at home. Many of these have been covered in two Facebook Live sessions: by Dr. Helen Kales, Chair of Psychiatry HERE, who talked about the bravery of helping our families at home; and myself HERE describing positive ways of interacting with your family and children. For all of you working at home, do please watch our own Pamela Wu present these entertaining and useful Facebook Live interviews.

So, let’s look at some practical suggestions to help us thrive while sheltering in place at home. What about taking up new interests, and using them for your own and your family's good? You may have thought about taking painting lessons from YouTube but never got around to it. Or of redeveloping passions that you had years ago that have been lost, perhaps cooking, arts and crafts, board and card games, gardening, or writing and blogging. Not just TV and reading, which Nerd Bear, a culture website referenced HERE, has found still at the top of our national list of hobbies.

Look at all the other possibilities and use your time creatively so that you can eventually look back with a sense of pride and achievement on “what you and your family did” during the coronavirus crisis. Make your interests relevant to your family or friends and do them with your children and loved ones. Learn more about each other and communicate via these mutual passions and interests. You may find that you change your ways so much that, when we return to more normal times, you will be in your own “new normal” existence, living a much more interesting, creative and socially interactive life with your loved ones.

Think about joining in a community activity, even when based at home. We have a blue light in our front window that shines each night to show solidarity and respect for all essential workers. Dr. Kales describes how she has put a teddy bear in her window so children walking the neighborhood can go on a “bear hunt,” and how fun it has been to see their faces on seeing the bear. Have physically distanced conversations with your neighbors when you are out, and they pass by. You will be surprised at how often people respond positively. Help your neighbors and especially those who live alone and may be isolated. Helping others helps ourselves.

Tell us all what you have been doing. School of Medicine Dean Brashear is looking for your success stories HERE. Tell all of us your stories. What has helped and what has not? Send photos and post examples of your activities. Use our UC Davis Slack page (find us on the #healthyucdavis channel, Facebook and Instagram to connect. We are a community all pulling together, and we need to help each other, even as we acknowledge that we are not all equally adversely affected. We need to particularly help those who are not as fortunate as ourselves in this difficult time. Thank you for all that you do.
If you are just arriving
Thank you
For what you are about to do!!!
Emergency Pavilion
"Everyone was very nice, respectable and very helpful. Thank You all for all that you did for me. I'm doing real good. Thank You for putting me on the right track."

ENT Pediatrics
"First time having an appointment at this place and I was amazed with how understanding and caring everyone was. Thank you so much! Best place I have ever been before."

Urology Clinic ACC
"Urology is the best clinic in the UCDMC system!!"

D7 Pediatrics
"Thank you so much! We appreciate the urgency you guys provided for our non-verbal autistic child. You guys went above & beyond. We will never go anywhere else again."

Emergency Pavilion
"It was nice that when my son was allowed solid food a nurse gave me a voucher to get him food from the cafeteria. She walked me far enough to make sure I knew where the cafeteria was and made sure I knew how to get back to my son's room."