A message from Dr. Peter Yellowlees, Chief Wellness Officer

How to cope with uncertainty – the COVID-19 crisis and beyond

Thank you everyone for your commitment, hard work, and continued excellence, especially in these times of uncertainty.

These are truly uncertain times. We are all uncertain. About many issues.

The obvious questions relate to COVID-19 and are what I hear from colleagues and staff throughout UC Davis Health on a daily basis.

Most commonly: “How can I look after my loved ones and not spread infection to them?”

And then: “How do we look after ourselves and our patients? What is this new illness? How will it affect us individually and as a society? How long will we be required to shelter in place at home? Is physical distancing here for the long term? How are my family and friends? What is going on in my relationships? Will I remain employed? What are our potential economic losses? Will we graduate? How will we learn? Will we survive?” And many more.

Complex questions like these may leave us feeling overwhelmed at times. So how do we cope with this uncertainty? We all have to. Here are some suggestions:

1. **Acknowledge that uncertainty exists.** It is true that life has changed dramatically and continues to do so on a day-to-day basis in ways that are uncertain, and involve the threat of infection, loss of life, and financial survival, among others. It is not realistic for any of us to

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UC Davis Health Chief Wellness Officer Peter Yellowlees will send you “Good Stuff” wellness tips and resources twice each week.
entirely master this uncertainty, so don’t be hard on yourselves, and temper your needs to control everything. Take one day at a time. Life is difficult at the moment. The “new normal” will not be the same. Some good will eventually come from these challenging times.

2. **Normalize and share your ambivalence.** It is normal to feel ambivalent about having to face a major crisis like COVID-19. Don’t avoid your uncertainty. Everyone has it. Remember it is not a sign of weakness to talk about your feelings with colleagues, friends or family. It is OK to not feel OK. Talking about uncertainty with others will make you and them feel less anxious.

3. **Be flexible and creative.** Put yourselves in the shoes of others. Challenge yourself to empathize with each other’s perspectives. This will likely make you more flexible and open in your thinking, especially around essential short-term decisions that you have to make. It will also help you to cope and respond to new information and shifting challenges over time. Try not to make major long-term decisions at present.

4. **Reconstruct routines and rituals.** We are all working and living differently. Consciously reconstruct new routines and rituals in this new context so that you bring more structure into your lives. We all do better with structure. Planning most if not all meals at home may be a new experience for you and/or your family. Enjoy this new routine and involve the family. Thank heaven for the Food Network! You can do it. Try it!

5. **Seek meaning in your life.** Try to find meaning in how you use your extra time at home. Use the crisis as an opportunity to bond with your family or work on your relationships, reconnect with old friends, take stock of your lives and look for new opportunities.

Try to think of this time sheltering at home as being an opportunity to accomplish important goals. Despite the COVID-19 disaster, and the uncertainties that it brings, we all still have choices to live life in meaningful ways. The actions and choices we make now have the potential to define us moving forward as we cope, survive and rebuild.

And if you want to discuss these uncertainties with other staff, why not join one of the daily ASAP drop-in groups on Zoom (learn more in this [Word doc HERE](#)), or check the [Insider calendar](#) for upcoming sessions).
E8 Medical/Surgical Specialties
“The skill of the nurses was at a high level and deeply appreciated.”

UC Davis Medical Group Elk Grove GI Procedure
“Everything went well. Very good care team. Excellent.”

UC Davis Medical Group Folsom Clinic
“I am very satisfied and grateful for all the Dr.s, technicians, nurses, and support staff at UC Davis. I value our relationship and hope it continues. Thank you to all for being there for me.”

Emergency Pavilion
“Very friendly, asked great questions about medical history and were very thorough.”

Ophthalmology Cadillac Drive
“Everyone at the UC Davis Eye Center has always been very professional, knowledgeable, and caring. They treat me very well.”