A message from Dr. Peter Yellowlees, Chief Wellness Officer

How big is your bubble?

Many people are expressing feelings of “quarantine fatigue.” The news headlines show some people much too close together on beaches along the coasts. People miss the freedom to just be outdoors and enjoying life as we knew it. How do you feel? What are your thoughts about the time we are living in? What will it be like to look back and think about all that has happened to us? How do we get back to normal? What is the “new normal?” Will we be OK? What has helped us, our friends, family and colleagues navigate these strange times?

I am like everyone else. Things seem weird and uncertain at present. What will happen tomorrow? Life feels like it is constantly changing. As if we are all living in some time of persistent acceleration. A time when we have lost control over aspects of our life. Where decisions are difficult to make, both short and long term.

Our completely natural fear of uncertainty persists, despite how well we have coped with the initial phase of COVID-19. It seems pretty likely that there may at some stage be a second phase of COVID-19. Likely we will have another year or eighteen months of behavior change to tolerate.

But we have coped amazingly well with all that has been thrown at us so far. We are creatures of habit who have successfully adapted to radical changes on short notice. We should all be proud of ourselves at UC Davis. And we will continue to cope I am sure, especially as we gradually reopen our lives, and the health system.
How?

Let me suggest some simple techniques. Firstly, think of yourself as living in a physical "bubble." In the past two months our bubble has been pretty small. Much smaller than usual. Just our immediate family and loved ones, and maybe a few close colleagues. Try writing down everyone who is in your bubble right now. The whole point of physical distancing and social connecting is to keep us all inside a small bubble of people to stop viral transmission.

Soon we will be allowed to start expanding our bubble. Slowly. Gradually. Socially and professionally connecting with more people, while still maintaining protection as appropriate and necessary. At work we will gradually give more patients access to our physical bubble. But we have to be careful. We have to look after our patients, ourselves and our colleagues. And we have to continue to be careful about the separation of any potential transmission vectors, such as ourselves, from work, home or community.

At one of many Zoom meetings I was at this week, a colleague mentioned a wonderful “Going Home Checklist” of behaviors posted in Shriners Hospital that we can all do as we leave work to go home. Here it is:

* Take a moment to think about today
* Acknowledge ONE thing that was difficult today: Let it go
* Be proud of the care you gave today
* Consider THREE things that went well
* Check on your colleagues before you leave: Are they OK?
* Are you OK? Your team is here to listen and support you
* Now switch your attention to home: REST AND RECHARGE

This is such a good process. Great advice. I do it myself, especially when I have had a difficult day. Do please try it. I teach residents that I supervise to do this. It is a great way of remaining positive and keeping your work life in perspective, and separated from your home life.

What else can you do? Lots of things. Here are some examples:

“Check-in” with your colleagues and friends. Do this at any meetings. At the beginning of rounds. Whenever you have a group discussion, or even a one-on-one conversation. Ask others how they are. Listen to them. Thank them. Share experiences and worries, but also the good things that are happening, the successes. Make the “check-in” part of the “new normal" where we routinely care for, and thank, each other. If you chair a committee or a group, put “check-in" as your first order of business EVERY TIME. If you are on the phone to someone, check in with them first. Show how much you care. Your care for others will be returned to you by others. And we will ultimately become a more caring and concerned community.

“Develop buddy systems” within your teams. Especially do this for those who are lonely, isolated or away from families, as is quite often the case in health care where many staff move around frequently for training purposes. Make sure that buddies check on each other, help each other, are there for each other, and involve each other in community interactions.

Talk to a “Support U” peer supporter HERE - a wonderful process that nursing has embraced, headed by Michelle Linenberger, and which is now spreading widely across the
health system. Or become a peer supporter. Already 16 physicians, among other staff, have part-completed the 4-hour training process, and any more who wish to do this are welcome.

Finally try out the daily Zoom drop-in groups on a variety of topics being run by our excellent clinical psychologists at the Academic and Staff Assistance Program led by Carol Kirshnit PhD, HERE (and check the Insider events calendar for other upcoming meetings).

Do look after yourselves. Allow your bubble to enlarge. And thank you for all that you do.

Emergency Pavilion
"EVERYONE was very nice & considerate - made us feel comfortable & well cared for."

D10 PICU
"Fast discharge. We didn't wait for too long."

Internal Medicine Clinic ACC
"All staff very courteous and helpful. Doctor very informative and caring."

ENT Clinic Glassrock
"I have received, what I consider to be, the finest, most time efficient, care at UC Davis. I am continually impressed with how well your system is operated! THANK YOU!"

Transplant Clinic
"I have nothing but praise for everyone who has helped me at UC Davis."