A message from Dr. Peter Yellowlees, Chief Wellness Officer

Adjusting to changes in our lives....

“Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future.” – John F. Kennedy

We are all moving on to a new wave of the impact of COVID-19 and I think the John F. Kennedy quote is so true right now. We have been massively disrupted over the past three months, and this disruption will most likely continue forward for at least a year.

But we have to respond effectively as individuals and as a community, using our inherent resilience to respond to continuing uncertainty and the need for change. In health care we need to change many of our practices and workflows as we open up to our patients, and this can be a good thing for us and our patients if we think and plan carefully and learn from our COVID-19 experiences. One thing UC Davis Health can be proud of thus far is how well our entire staff has managed this great challenge.

Remember that making changes in our lives is a matter of choice. Our choice. We do not need to be victims. We should look at the range of choices available to us in confronting any situation like the present.

This includes the choice of least resistance which we see some trying to make. That choice is to try to deny, and magically wish away, the dreadful impact of COVID-19 on ourselves and our society, nationally and internationally, and thereby not make our choice to change. Most of us prefer to seek strategies that move us forward, enabling us to survive and hopefully
eventually find ways to thrive.

We will all have to change in the future, and likely in many unpredictable ways, as discussed by Fareed Zakaria in a CNN special on the “Post COVID-19 World” that aired this past weekend.

**But how can we change?**

There are a number of well-proven strategies that will enable you to adapt and successfully manage change in your life. Here they are:

1. **Change your mindset – Think about the need to change.** Think of all the areas where this is necessary. Do not get stuck in the past, how you used to do things. Embrace change and get out of your comfort zone, which is where your unconscious wants you to stay. Make a conscious choice to live and work differently and avoid letting your fears and self-limiting beliefs control what you do. Remember, change is a choice, but so is not changing. If you really don’t want to change, make the status quo a clear choice and own it. When you begin to feel odd wearing a mask in the grocery store, look around, you are not alone. It’s ok, in fact you are part of a community plan to combat this virus.

2. **Find meaning in your life.** This is why you need to change. As health care workers we are lucky. We are essential. Everything that we do contributes to the community good. Let’s all do even better than we have in the past for our patients. Think about this, and in all the differing areas of your life, look for more purpose and direction. At work, at home, in your community, with your loved ones. Keep connecting with friends and family via video, phone, text - just maintain safe physical distancing.

3. **Let go of your regrets and your losses.** Not being able to visit family and friends, go to a soccer or baseball game, attend a wedding, or meet people at your favorite coffee shop can be frustrating at best. These changes in our daily lives are difficult and require we go through a process which, in the end, can lead to acceptance of the situation and moving to a new way of life. As President Kennedy said, we must live in the present and the future, not burdened by the past, or how we did things in the past.

4. **Challenge yourself to change, and plan or do things differently,** within the limits of social distancing and disease transmission guidelines of course. Then try them out. Do them. The best disruptive companies learn by breaking things and trying again. Learning from their mistakes. Iteratively. Challenge yourself. Think about all the new things you have done recently – teaching your children, riding your bike, cooking, learning Zoom etiquette, becoming the family barber. And think how you can apply your new skills at work with your colleagues (maybe not the barbering skills, unless you are shaving someone bald for charity!). Talk to them about your ideas, and see which ones will improve your own performance, and that of your colleagues.

5. **Focus on living a balanced and healthy life** to improve your resilience and make yourself capable of sustaining the changes necessary as we move forward through more phases of the COVID pandemic. Eat a healthy diet, exercise, sleep well, reduce or avoid cigarettes, alcohol, caffeine, sugar and drugs. Take breaks from technology and the constant news cycle and nurture your relationships. At work, take breaks and refresh yourself. Plan to connect with
people and activities that have a positive impact on you. Walk or bike rather than drive and thereby keep fit. Watch the Food Network to create a more healthy diet at home rather than bingeing the latest episodes of the “drama du jour.” There will be lots more opportunities for more positive changes over time. Just look out for them.

At work there are going to be a lot of changes as we gradually reopen to our patients. And I am convinced that we will ultimately provide better care, with in particular more attention to our own well-being as “essential workers,” than we have in the past. Just keep your eye on the future, not the past.

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“Everyone at UC Davis wants to make you feel welcome and above all they are very concerned about your health. Very clean and welcoming.”

Cancer Center Medical Oncology
“I have had the best care here, better than any other hospital. The entire team is AWESOME.”

D11 Trauma Nursing Unit
“I believe your hospital is the best I have ever seen - Your hiring practice pays off.”

T4 ENT/Internal Medicine
“Worked together like clockwork.”

Urology Clinic ACC
“I always look forward to visiting Urology. They treat me very well.”