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Compassion

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Agree to Disagree

*“There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up.” ― John Holmes*

In light of the worldwide pandemic we are experiencing, we’ve heard the phrase, *“These are unprecedented times.”* and it’s true. Most likely, we’re all feeling quite unsettled. Maybe a loved one has lost their job, your routine has been completely disrupted, or you have a family member with an increased contagion risk. So what can we do with all of these overwhelming feelings? We can start with small acts of compassion. Giving a reassuring smile, saying thank you, or reaching out to a co-worker to offer support and encouragement might seem simple, but these gestures go a long way during times of crisis. We’re *in* this together, and with mutual compassion, we’ll get *through* this together.

**Daily Practice**: Compassion is one of Spectrum Health’s core values. **How can you show compassion to a co-worker today?**

**Compassion is contagious**

*“Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.” ― Dalai Lama XIV*

The COVID-19 virus is contagious but so is compassion! As the Dalai Lama says, “Humanity cannot survive without compassion.” As we see it displayed, a chain reaction of giving begins. As you know, many restaurant employees were just laid off and are unsure how they’re going to make ends meet. And yet they’ve turned around and left a scrumptious meal on their elderly neighbor’s porch. Each act of compassion is uplifting, and more importantly, it uplifts you! The joy expressed is ‘infectious’ and that’s something we want to ‘spread’. As hopeful as we are about finding a COVID-19 vaccine, let’s hope we never find one for the ‘Compassion Contagion’!

**Daily Practice**: **Notice the acts of compassion all around you and jump into the fray!**

**Compassion expands your perspective**

*“Our task must be to free ourselves... by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and it's beauty.” ― Albert Einstein*

The world is suddenly in a crisis. All normalcy and routine have gone out the window. It might seem cliché, but the best of humanity is displayed during times of crisis. Why? Because our perspective changes. We see our lives through a wider lens and start to wonder what’s important. We begin to take inventory of ourselves and the world around us. Let’s take this opportunity to expand our perspective. From a state of compassion, we can evolve for the better, which gives us the clarity to do the next right thing.

**Daily Practice: As you experience these recent changes in your life, note how your perspective has changed.**

**Compassion connects you to others**

*“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.” ― Mother Teresa*

If there is a silver lining in this pandemic, it is that being confined to our homes has shown us in a very real way how much we need each other. ‘Social distancing’ has become the new buzz term, but what that really means is ‘physical distancing,’ not emotional distancing. Hearing about Italians gathering on their apartment balconies to serenade each night, has inspired New Yorkers to open their own windows and sing *Hey Jude* in unison. By creatively fostering community, this chorus of compassion is an example of how we can stay connected, and as the song says…” you can start to make things better.”

**Daily Practice**: Today, connect with a friend and find out what’s on their quarantine playlist!

**Self-Compassion**

*“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.” - Dalai Lama*

Many are experiencing fear and anxiety, and those feelings lead to questions like: Why? What if? and How will this affect me? One way to cope is practicing self-compassion. Treating yourself like a friend by extending the same reassurance and support that you would offer to someone else is a start. Think about the kind of advice you would give and the tone of voice you would use. Being a comfort to yourself should sound like the comfort you would give to others. Because you too, are worthy of compassion.

**Daily Practice: Today, give yourself a hug with your words.**