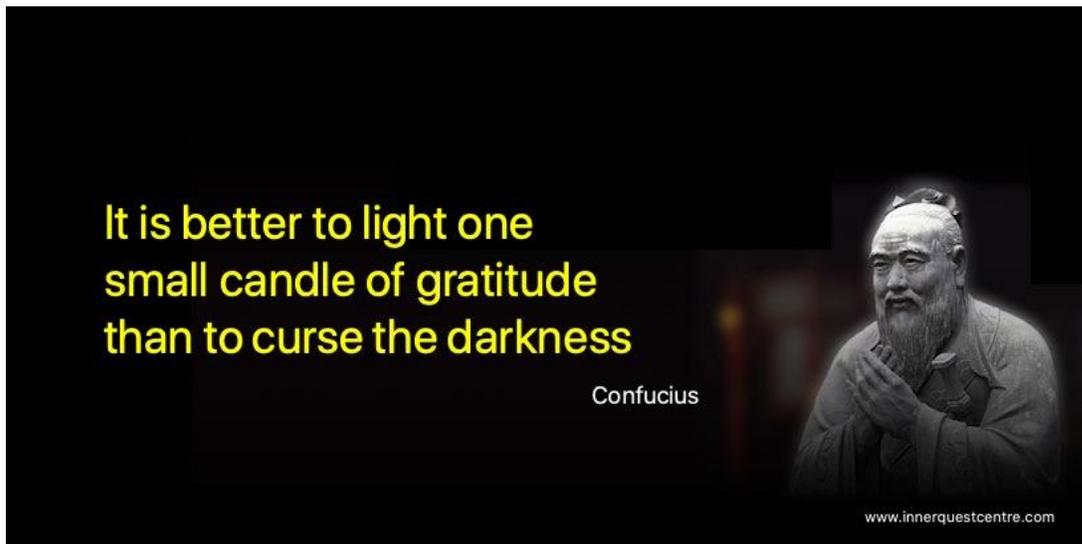




What Has The Coronavirus Taught Us In Our Life?”

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I have just posted on Facebook asking a question, “What has the Coronavirus taught us in our life?” One thing that amazes me, is that COVID-19 has provided reminder of our interconnectedness.

This morning I was reading Tom Hollaway book “The Relationship Principles of Jesus” and it was the chapter about “Feelings are Important”. It gives example of how Jesus took emotions seriously and expressed emotions openly, not denying his

emotions but denied Himself by not always bowing to emotions, keeping feelings from running His life and chose to act lovingly.

I have always say to my clients there is a wisdom to our emotions, and even now during the COVID-19 there is a wisdom to our anxiety and fear. We do not want to get rid of our anxiety or fear. These are the things that will help motivate us to wash our hands, stop touching our face and take other protective measures recommended by the government and health organization. But, like Jesus and as always, we need to be wise about the way in which we react our emotions. Giving into panic is not helpful. Hoarding supplies rather than allowing others to have some are prime examples of the selfishness that can arise during times of crisis. Do not allow anxiety and fear to manifest in these behaviours. Now more than ever, it is important to practice compassion towards ourselves and others as a way of not giving into panic and the behaviours that result from this state of mind.

It is therefore important to take care of your mental health and have a stress prevention plan alongside your cleaning, sanitization and physical distancing plan. Stress impairs your physical and mental health, including your immune function. Research supports that mindfulness and related stress-reduction skills have numerous health benefits, including enhanced immune function, emotion regulation, and well-being while decreasing anxiety, depression, and rumination to name a few.

I am suggesting three important things to do to in a good stress prevention plan:

1. Have awareness of your stress level.
2. Utilize skills to minimize your stress—pay attention to your red flags.
3. Have a good plan in place on ways to take care of yourself.

1. *Awareness* – Noticing and knowing how you experience stress—both physically and emotionally, and recognizing the signs and cues your body provides is very useful important first step. Additionally, having awareness of what stressors are leading to this stress is important in effecting change in your stress level.

2. *When you are stressed, look for red flags. Consider the acronym for red FLAGS.*

Forgetting to do thing you love? It is important that you engage with the people and things in your life that support, nourish, and fill you up so that you aren't feeling drained, depleted, and more susceptible to stress and illness.

Lonely? Spend time with others in ways you can. Can't spend time physically with people, use online meetings, the telephone, or apps that let you video with your friends and family. Stay connected in the ways you can. Also, if you can be around nature—at a park nearby or in your backyard—make sure you get around nature and some clean air. If you have a pet, engage in extra snuggling.

Anxious or **A**ngry? Take a mindful break or breath. It is as easy as 1-2-3. Notice your body, your breath, and your mind—both your thoughts and feelings. It can be frustrating when your normal routine gets impinged upon or when your plans get

cancelled. It can lead you to feeling angry or anxious. Notice how you feel. It is okay to feel. It is when you get stuck and can't let it go that can really impact your stress and health.

Grieving? Ask for support. If you aren't doing well emotionally or physically, ask those who you can for help.

Stuck? Look for options. If none of the aforementioned are working, consider the following. If you are hungry, eat; tired, sleep or nap; feeling down, reach out.

3. In these times, focus on what's going right instead of what's going wrong.

Come up with and list of two or three things that are going right in each of these areas:

- Family
- Friends
- Health
- Strengths
- Abilities
- Talents

If you connect with family and friends you are providing for your need of connection.

If you take care of your health you are taking care of your safety, and if you do those

things that you are able to do that engage your strengths, abilities and talents, you are engaging in your satisfaction.

Finally, like what Tom Hollaway said in his book “The Relationship Principles of Jesus”, the book “The Purpose Driven Life”, focused on personal renewal. This is the starting point Everything starts in the heart. When physical distancing is deemed necessary, please take care of your mental health by practicing compassion towards yourself and your inner experience.

The second kind of renewal stated in Tom Hollaway book is relational renewal. Please protect your community by practicing the compassionate act of physical distancing. When physical distancing is deemed necessary, social and emotional connectedness is even more critical. Our interconnectedness has never been more clearly on display. We are united in this situation not as a moral imperative, but as a survival imperative.

Act on physical distancing but don't isolate. Isolation is horrible for people's mental health. Find ways of staying connected, through text, calling, or facetime and consider scheduling social events such as a virtual coffee date or happy hour through Zoom or Google Hangouts. Get creative! Google Chrome actually has an extension called Netflix Party that allows you to watch Netflix with your friends remotely.

Maintain a regular routine that mirrors your typical day. Try to wake up and go to bed at the same time, take a shower, get out of your pajamas and change to normal working attire (women do your makeup), have a regular start time plus a dedicated workspace, schedule breaks, etc.

Stay active! Even while physical distancing, you can go for a walk or run. There are also online workout classes which you can do from the safety and comfort of your own home. It is a great time to either begin or deepen a meditation practice!

Headspace has a great introduction series. My favorite app is Abide, some other good apps include Mindfulness, Calm and InsightTimer. Also have fun! This is a great time to do things you may not normally have time for, reading, cooking new recipes or perhaps cleaning and reorganizing things at home.

LIMIT MEDIA EXPOSURE! I am encouraging clients to implement daily media updates rather than spending hours online. People are being flooded with negative, threatening, panic-inducing information and that information is becoming over-represented in their mind. Increased screen time can cause anxiety, distractibility and loneliness. It can also promote a sedentary lifestyle and affect sleep, so it's "not surprising" that screen time has negative mental and physical health impacts. The number one way you can improve your mental health is to choose carefully the media you interact with on a day-to-day basis. There's credible media coverage, but there's also a different sort of less credible media coverage

On top of this, the news is changing constantly, which could cause even more anxiety for some. Avoid overindulgence of news, articles, posts, especially if you are being overwhelmed, There is a lot of misinformation and panic/fear, which only serves to heighten one's own anxieties. If you feel others are sending too much info, you can choose to ask them to stop sending and/or disengage from the conversation.