Prioritizing Mental Health Care and Coverage During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Elana Newman, PhD
Department of Psychology
University of Tulsa, OK
Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma

Why are we here?

- Covid-19 An unprecedented crisis
- Journalism plays a critical role
  - Many of you were not expecting to cover trauma, crisis and mental health – new area
- Challenges both craft and personal capacities
- Stay resilient, effective and relevant
Goals

• Give you a few ideas about college mental health & trauma
• Focus on your well being

Ideas for coverage

• Resilience – creative ways students are engaging, connecting, making a difference- stories of juggling, managing
• College mental health services
  • Capacity, usage
  • Crossing state lines on online platforms
• Grief/Loss of developmental milestone – graduation
• Returning to chaotic/under-resourced areas
• Students with special needs
• International Students
• Athletes specific mental health issues
• Impact on professors & administrators
• Graduate students needs – anxiety, worry
• Economic impact on Universities
  • Credit rating outlooks of US higher education have been downgraded to negative - 2021
  • Shared governance issues in emergencies
• Impact on research and experiential learning
  • IRBs
• Online issues
• Accreditation Issues
Starting Point 1:
The Education Beat has changed

- **Become “trauma/crisis” reporters**
  - This is not breaking news but long haul
- **Vicarious** – empathic engagement with traumatized sources & communities
- **Moral distress** – breach of our moral compass
- **Stories that interact** with our personal history and identity
- **Direct risks of in person coverage**
  - Safety/ risk assessments
  - For some of you, remote reporting is a challenge
- **Stories of Uncertainty, lack of control**
  - Telling stories about what we don’t know is not in typical toolbox
- **Doing this with balancing new routines, etc.**

Starting point 2:
Resilience is the norm

- Research shows that mission, craft, ethics and colleagues are all protective factors
- Majority of journalists return to their equilibrium and are fine
What is different about this pandemic?

- Anxiety is real, valid and normal  (Meyer, FB post March 30, 2020)
  - General anxiety
  - Journalism specific experiences
- Loss and Grief are real for everyone
  - Anticipatory Anxiety
  - Loss of a semester
  - Loss of expected outcomes
- Change in expectations is hard for everyone
- Humans crave predictability/certainty and control – we don’t have it!
  - Hard wired to react

Know your signs:
People cope differently

- Old bad habits can come back- make a plan
  - What do experience when you are stressed?
- Use good habits, signature strengths to your advantage
- Pre-existing vulnerabilities need attention
Are you a worrier?

- Worry is real in today’s world
- Focus on TODAY not tomorrow
- Make a list of what you can and can’t control – focus on what you can control
- Set a worry time

(Meyer, FB post March 30, 2020)

Shorten stress response:
Technology and boundaries

- Changing nature of work and technology are intertwined, boundaries are more permeable

- Consequences of technological tethers
  - The Bad: WF conflict, technopressure
  - The Good: Flexibility, job performance
  - Benefits are strongest for people who see technology as a resource

- Set boundaries around and with technology
What Works: Self-care

- Pace yourself: regulate trauma/anxiety load
- Social connection
- Know your signs!
- Stay grounded & lower arousal: exercise, mediation etc
- Sleep!
- Have a self-care plan/practice
- Training (like today)
- Attainable victories!

When to Self Care

- Self care has no limits or time frame, you can participate in it any time, any where

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Between Projects/Assignments</th>
<th>End of the Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write some notes</td>
<td>Take a shower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get a drink</td>
<td>Call or talk to a friend/colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to the bathroom</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wash hands</td>
<td>Read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretch</td>
<td>Watch some television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat a snack</td>
<td>Change clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a short walk if safe</td>
<td></td>
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Adapted from J Ragsdale, 2019
What Works When Working Remotely

- Get dressed
- Have a schedule
  - Schedule breaks
- Change “problems” to “challenges”
- Boundaries
- Keep track of accomplishments
- Work journal

What Works: Social and Collegial Support

- Physical distance isn’t social distance: use technology to ASSERTIVELY reach out to others
- PLAN coffee hours, cocktail hours, dinners
- Learn from one another! – craft, self-care, skills
- Peer support – being a good colleague: All research shows that one of the best indicators that someone will be resilient is the support they give AND receive from others.
Meaning-making

• What meaning are you personally making about COVID-19?
  • Sense of the world
  • Yourself
  • Your relationships
• Do you find any positive of fulfilling meaning from this?
• What meaning are you providing others?

Back To Wendy! Here are some resources

• www.Dartcenter.org
• https://dartcenter.org/content/covering-trauma-impact-on-journalists
• https://dartcenter.org/events/2020/03/reporting-and-covid-19-webinar-series-journalists
• https://dartcenter.org/resources/covering-coronavirus-advice-video-journalists
• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbCFmXG3Qns
• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxwWW0x7vIY&t=441s
• Telepsychology hub by state -APA
• Association for university and college counseling center directors- https://www.aucccd.org/