

CBMHS WEEKLY REFLECTION

Maintaining Mental Health During Challenging Times

Dear Friends, During the past eight weeks, most of us have felt some serious Pandemic pain, whether physically, emotionally or spiritually. But for some of us, the pain has been unrelenting and overwhelming. Even if we are doing pretty well overall, we have friends, family members and neighbors who are struggling. As time goes by and the pain persists, we have different ways of coping. Many of us seek to minimize or deny the pain as long as possible: we self-medicate with food, alcohol or an addiction/ drug of choice. Others focus on the pain obsessively: worried that the pain will never end, or that pain ‘signals the end.’ Let’s consider a middle way!

HONEST SELF-ASSESSMENT

Think about your experiences over the past 4-6 weeks.

If your pain and suffering could be described on a scale of 1 to 10, so that 0 indicates ‘no significant pain’ and 10 represents the ‘worst pain imaginable,’ how would you describe your pain?

Little or no pain? If you are rating your pain anywhere between 0 and 3, consider that you are doing pretty well under the circumstances. Your healthiest treatment options include affirmation (for example, ‘I am good enough,’ ‘I am doing the best I can in difficult circumstances’), a daily gratitude practice (see Gratefulness.org for specific suggestions) or positive connection with others (reach out to a loved one, or to someone in need of encouragement).

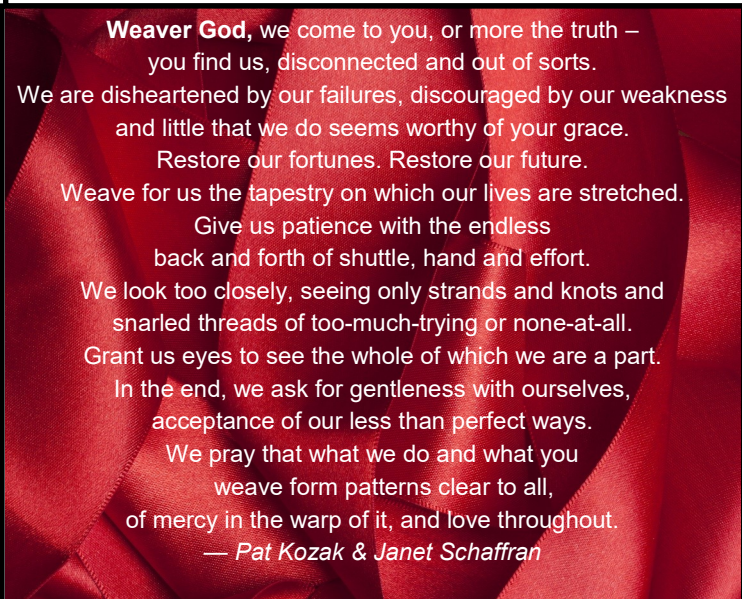
Breathe Actively: *Sit or stand. Begin with your feet slightly apart, arms at your sides. Breathing in, keep your elbows straight as you lift your arms in front of you until they are shoulder level, horizontal to the ground. Breathing out, bring your arms down again to your sides. Repeat this movement three more times and observe how you feel.*

Pain that cannot be ignored? If you are rating your pain somewhere between 4 and 7, pay attention. Recommit to your preferred coping strategies. Your healthiest treatment option is to get some fresh air and exercise: consider a short walk in your neighborhood, or some fresh air: just sitting by an open window, looking at the trees, listening for the birds and breathing fresh air has considerable benefits.

Walk Mindfully: *Walk at a natural pace. Place your hands wherever comfortable: on your belly, behind your back, or at your sides. With each step, pay attention to the lifting and falling of your foot. Notice movement in your legs and the rest of your body. Notice any shifting of your body from side to side. Whatever else captures your attention, come back to the sensation of walking. Your mind will wander, so without frustration, guide it back again as many times as you need. Particularly outdoors, maintain a larger sense of the environment around you, taking it all in, staying safe and aware.*

Pain has become suffering! If you are experiencing unrelenting pain that you rate between 8 and 10, you need and deserve help. Are you willing to ask for help? Some of us find it very difficult to admit that we need support. Perhaps you can ask God for the willingness to accept that you are suffering and need help. Are you willing to attend a recovery support group on-line? Try [www.samhsa.gov>find help>national-helpline](http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline). This national Helpline is a free, confidential, 25/7, 365 day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families.

Are you willing to ask a trusted health care professional for help? *CBMHS can provide a compassionate assessment and vetted referrals consistent with your values, needs and resources through the **Warm Line**.*



Weaver God, we come to you, or more the truth –
you find us, disconnected and out of sorts.
We are disheartened by our failures, discouraged by our weakness
and little that we do seems worthy of your grace.
Restore our fortunes. Restore our future.
Weave for us the tapestry on which our lives are stretched.
Give us patience with the endless
back and forth of shuttle, hand and effort.
We look too closely, seeing only strands and knots and
snarled threads of too-much-trying or none-at-all.
Grant us eyes to see the whole of which we are a part.
In the end, we ask for gentleness with ourselves,
acceptance of our less than perfect ways.
We pray that what we do and what you
weave form patterns clear to all,
of mercy in the warp of it, and love throughout.
— Pat Kozak & Janet Schaffran

The CBMHS Warm Line is open and anyone can call: If you are experiencing emotional stress, side effects of the COVID19 pandemic and shelter-in-place order, reach out. Call Monday through Friday between 10am and 4pm and a licensed counselor will call you back within 24 hours! Call the Warmline to speak to a professional counselor who will listen and provide useful guidance to help you feel better. Receive information about resources and social services needs including depression, grief, anger, parenting support, substance abuse, shelter needs, and more. Request that an outreach call be made to someone who is isolated, lonely, or may not reach out on their own. But remember that the Warm Line is not a crisis hotline— If you need immediate assistance, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

Middlesex, Somerset & Union County: (732) 867-8647
Monmouth & Ocean County: (732) 784-3394