

Counseling in the Time of COVID-19

By Cynthia Moreno Tuohy, BSW, NCAC II, CDC III, SAP, NAADAC Executive Director

COVID-19 is consuming the world’s attention. It is the lead topic on the news, the subject of our conversations, in our emails, and seemingly everywhere we turn. How to self-protect, self-quarantine, self-preserve and acquire our own stockpiles of food, water and toilet paper is consuming our thoughts. It is unlike any other time in my lifetime or that of anyone else I know. Nothing has grabbed our attention so tightly and mightily. Due to all the unknowns of COVID-19, people are scared. We all know this.

Many of us are experiencing losses during this time, whether it is the loss of a sense of security, the loss of a way of life, the loss of our health, or even the loss of a loved one. Loss and grief affect each of us in different ways, from a psychological and emotional standpoint to a physical and even behavioral standpoint. As we know, this is to divert or change the focus of our loss. Regardless of the ways we experience loss and grief, it is important at this time to recognize it, accept that it is real, and reach out for support.

So what causes the spirit to move from fear and uncertainty to peace and calm or from self-protection to neighbor or community protection? For me, it is keeping my mind on my Higher Power and that relationship that guides and nurtures me like no other human experience is able. The peace and satisfaction of helping someone else, even if they do not know it. Leaving food or toilet paper on someone’s doorstep, supporting those who have less, giving a smile as I pass a person (with physical distancing, of course) and asking, really asking, how they are and listening to their response, not just the words, but also the feeling behind it. By being tolerant with the person I live and am in quarantine with whose idiosyncrasies are about to blow my level of sanity to speak words that are not worthy of any conversation. By thinking beyond myself, my family, my colleagues and my friends to the broader neighborhood and community and world. What is my part? How do I find what I am supposed to do to “brighten the world”? What is my role and level of responsibility?

The gems that I see building out of the heat and pressure of this time are brilliant and many are things I would not expect, like finding an emerald just under the surface of the ground that I happen along when my toe stubbed on it. This time, so full of uncertainty, has given me specific certainties. I am certain that I will learn lessons from this time – lessons of humanity to others and humanity from others. Ways to connect that we were unaware of before this crisis. Ways to appreciate my family, colleagues, friends, surroundings, nature and a brisk walk, a bike ride, or a soak in the tub. Things that I have taken for granted and things that I have trusted, now reevaluated.

Some of my thoughts go to this particular season – the season of Spring – and new life and rebirth from a cold winter. Spring is a time many of us welcome as the promise of more light, warmth and freshness in the days and months to come. Some of my thoughts reflect on the spiritual aspects



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of this season. We know life is life on its terms, and that it has uncharted journeys and paths that are to be traveled and unraveled as we go. Still, that knowledge alone does not cause peace in the heart and soul, and still the feelings of uncertainty provoke our thoughts until we can find our own source of hope, light and love. Even a small light can illuminate the darkness. We are meant to be each other’s light. We know that as counselors, educators, and peers that our path is to spread hope, joy and the promise of a new day! And that is how I want to communicate to you.

It is vital that we use the skills we have to help ourselves, each other, our families and our communities to connect, to reflect, and to build tolerance and consideration of others in this time. I believe this time will teach us new ways to do this and to be grateful for all the blessings we do have. I have faith in the process and that “this too shall pass.”

It is important that you know that we, the Leadership of NAADAC, our staff and myself, are here to support you in the ways that we are able. We are working to connect with you with more vital webinars, eblasts, and resources. We are here to listen and to respond. We have been here for 48 years and we are not going away – we are here to support you.

Together, we can, and do, make a difference.

Blessings, Cynthia



Cynthia Moreno Tuohy, BSW, NCAC II, CDC III, SAP, is the Executive Director of NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, and has worked as an addiction professional for over 35 years. She has been a trainer in Domestic Violence/Anger Management and Conflict Resolution for over 25 years as well as an international, national and state trainer in a variety of topics. Moreno Tuohy is also a curriculum writer in addiction screening and evaluation, counseling methods, conflict resolution, co-occurring disorders, and medicated assisted treatment and recovery, and has written articles published in national and other trade magazines. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Social Work and is certified both nationally and in the State of Washington.