

WELLNESS WAVE

A LOOK THROUGH THE MOST
UNPRECEDENTED TIME OF OUR LIVES

Edited by

Drs. Greg Schneider & Suzanne Minor



FIU

Herbert Wertheim
College of Medicine



**TO WATCH THE SUN
SINK BEHIND A
FLOWER CLAD HILL.**

**TO WANDER ON IN A
HUGE FOREST
WITHOUT THOUGHT
OF RETURN.**

**TO STAND UPON THE
SHORE AND GAZE
AFTER A BOAT THAT
DISAPPEARS BEHIND
DISTANT ISLANDS.**

**TO CONTEMPLATE THE
FLIGHT OF WILD GEESE
SEEN AND LOST
AMONG THE CLOUDS.**

**AND, SUBTLE
SHADOWS OF
BAMBOO ON BAMBOO.**

**Zeami Motokiyo
(C. 1363-C. 1443)
Writer and Playwright**

INTRODUCTION

Historians often hold up Medieval Japan (1185 to 1603 CE) as a point of comparison with Medieval Europe. Both had feudal cultures, deep religious traditions, and an ongoing series of battles among warlords. There are, nevertheless, notable differences, perhaps the most striking being that Japan was not subject to a single pandemic during that time period. Certainly, there were epidemics of smallpox, some of which were quite devastating, but nothing on the grand scale of a plague. There was no confirmed history of the plague in Japan until the nation opened its doors to the rest of the world in the Meiji era (1868-1912).

These centuries of relative isolation allowed the islands to develop a distinctive family- and village-centered approach to health and social problems, alongside rich cultural traditions, some of which persist. The Noh, a form of dance-drama that emerged in the 14th century, stands as the longest continuously performed theater art in the world. (If you've ever seen a Kurosawa film or David Byrne's oversized Talking Heads business suit, you've seen the influence of Noh.) Conceptually, aspects of the Noh have even influenced the collection you are about to read.

The concept *Yūgen*, deriving from the Chinese characters (yōu xuán) meaning "mysterious," underpins much of the aesthetics informing the Noh, and, while difficult to define, connotes profound sublimity, grace, and subtlety. On the level of meaning, the Noh performer prefers the

evocative over the obvious and acknowledges the mournful beauty involved in sadness and loss. Moments of Yūgen are often small moments, but moments that hint at the beyond.

As our team attempted to offer tips, recommendations, and musings on daily work and life during today's pandemic, we conceived the Wellness Wire newsletters as vehicles for recognizing loss and uncertainty, but evoking hope. We aspired, more and less successfully, to offer resources and ideas to assist friends and colleagues in navigating the coronavirus pandemic. We have gathered the newsletters into this Wellness Wave as a time capsule of sorts of this difficult yet transformative time.

Unlike the isolation of Medieval Japan, we recognize how intertwined our lives are with the rest of the world. Like the village-focus of Medieval Japan, we yearn to offer a local source of support for the faculty and staff of the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine.

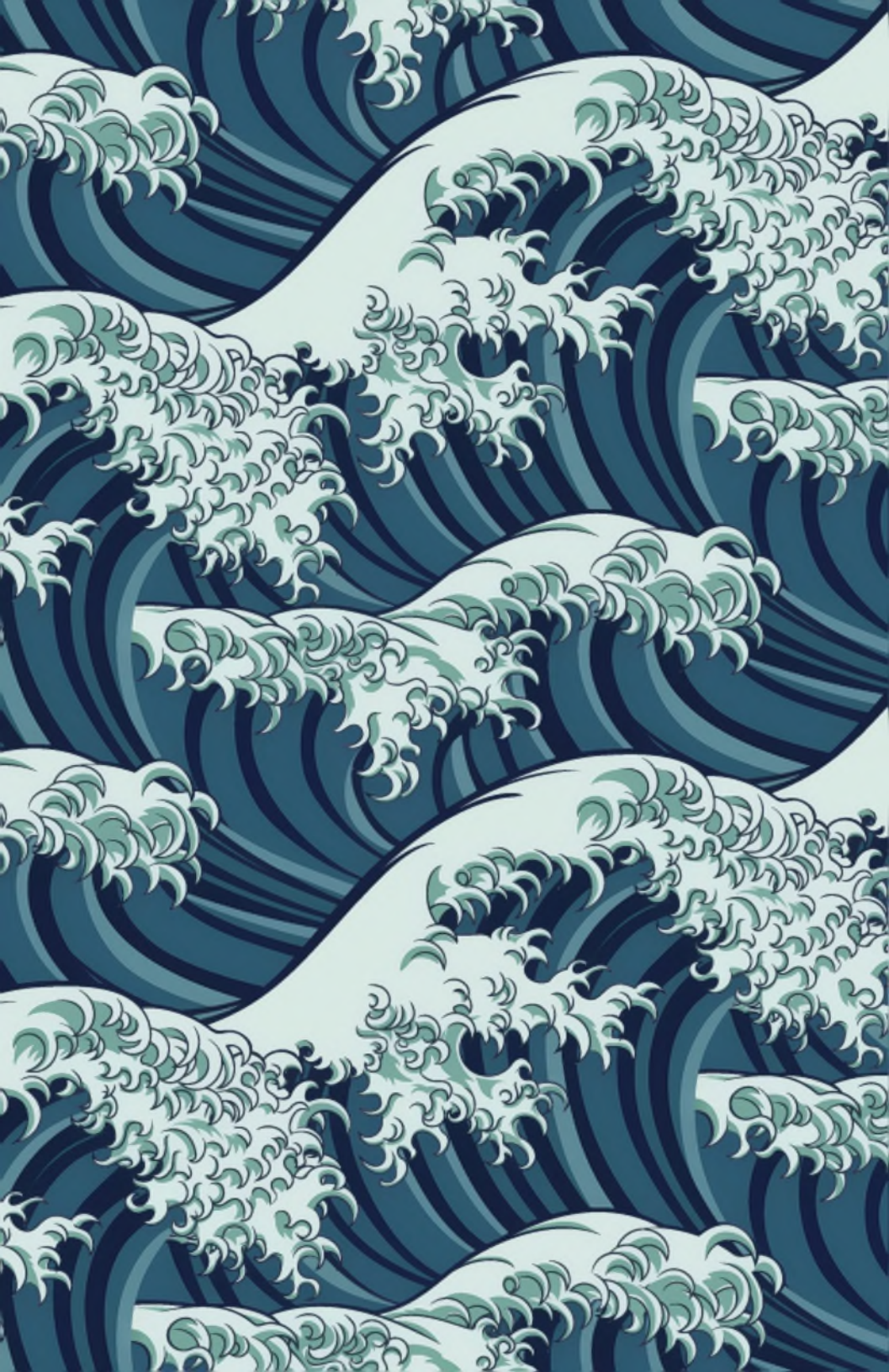
Enjoy,

Gregory Schneider, MD, and Suzanne Minor, MD
Editors

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**SPRING
2020**

REMAINING HEALTHY WHILE WORKING FROM HOME

As social beings, maintaining social distancing can be challenging. Here are a few ideas for remaining healthy while working from home.

1. **Establish a routine.** Yes, everyone can see you from Zoom. Get ready as if going to work.
2. **Prepare a space for yourself** to work at home. Avoid working in bed, or in front of the TV as it can create distractions. This can also help you have good sleep hygiene.
3. **Communicate!** Even the smallest reach has great impact. Be kind and thoughtful in your words. Words have power.
4. **Practice yoga, meditation, or whatever makes you feel good.** There is plenty of research indicating the benefits of meditation and you only need 5-10 minutes.

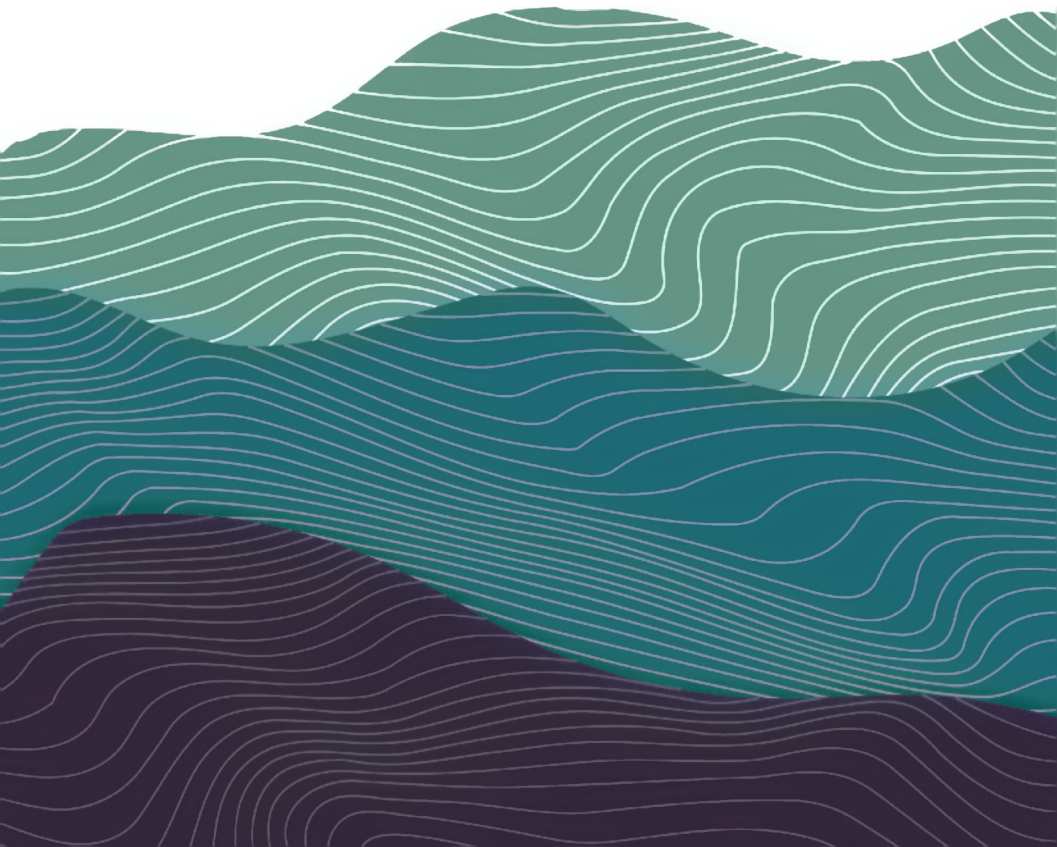
5. **Get sleep.** Sleep is critical to keeping yourself healthy and calm. Mindfulness apps work.
6. **Go outside.** Nature is a great healer. (Wear sunblock.) Take a walk. Walking stimulates your brain and senses, causing you to feel more joy.
7. **Eat well.** Learn new ways to adjust to what is available. It is fun. Try to prepare your meals ahead of time. This can help keep you on schedule with your typical eating habits. And don't forget to drink water.
8. Garden or perhaps help an elderly neighbor. They will watch you and wave.
9. Speaking of waving...wave and **say thank you** to all the people that are still working hard.
10. **Find a project** that you have been wanting to do. Please, just pick one and focus.
11. **Practice compassion, kindness and sensibility.** Fear triggers things in people. Understand and make exceptions.
12. Now is the time to **let go of ego and politics.**
13. Follow up on your **commitments and responsibilities.** You'll sleep better.

14. This is not a time to party. **Take it seriously**, kindly and lightly.
15. Most importantly, **always be kind to yourself and others**. Find your best self.

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD



If people find themselves struggling and would like to speak with someone, always remember the FIU Office of Employee Assistance. You can call the office at 305-348-2469 or email oea@fiu.edu for help.



ABOUT THE EDITOR



Dr. Gregory Schneider teaches medical students at all levels, concentrating on clinical skills, ethics, and the social factors involved in health. His career has focused on higher and medical education with over 20 years of teaching. Dr. Schneider spent a decade teaching undergraduate liberal arts, earning tenure at a liberal arts college, and more than 10 years teaching at the medical school level. He has practiced primary care in academic health, student health care,

and community health center settings. These experiences have all contributed to his appreciation of the importance of the doctor-patient relationship, empathy, and working as part of a diverse caregiving team.

MOVING FAST AND SLOW

One particular challenge of being stuck inside our homes and apartments is trying to keep our bodies moving.

Whether looking for a way to really move fast or just something on the slower side, there are a number of websites with at-home workouts using nothing but your bodyweight and easy to find objects.

If you are looking for a gentler routine, here is one that you might enjoy. This at-home circuit routine can get your heart rate up while also challenging strength and balance. Perform the circuit three times. Walk up and down steps or march in place for two to three minutes between sets. To up the effort, add dumbbells or try improvising with cans filled with coins or rice.

Chair Squats

Stand in front of a chair with your feet shoulder-width apart. Bend your knees, lowering your hips back, keeping weight in your heels and your chest upright. Start by sitting into the chair and standing back up 10 to 12 times. If this is easy, hover above the chair then return to standing.

Counter push-ups

Place your hands on the edge of a counter, just beyond shoulder-width apart. Lower into a pushup then press back up. Repeat 10 to 12 times. For more of a challenge, walk your feet farther away from the counter.

Chair triceps dips

Sit upright in a chair with your hands on the armrests, elbows bent at 90 degrees. Straighten your arms, lifting your body off the chair. Hold briefly. Then lower yourself down. Use your legs to balance. Repeat 10 to 12 times.

Calf raises

Begin in a standing position. Rise up onto your toes, hold briefly, then lower back down. Repeat 10 to 12 times. Place one or both hands on a table or chair for more support. For an added challenge, perform on one leg at a time.

Every little bit helps, so get moving!

For those seeking a more whimsical workout, see [how to get in 35 miles from your kitchen](#) or visit the interactive [Wellness Wall](#) in Teams!

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD

ISSUE 3, 6 APRIL 2020

RESOURCE EDITION: ANXIETY & COVID, COM WELLNESS

This issue presents two resources that you might find helpful during the coronavirus pandemic. You can also find links to these resources on the [HWCOM Wellness Website](#).

Anxiety and COVID-19, Montefiore and Albert Einstein College of Medicine Video

This is an [outstanding video](#) about dealing with anxiety and cultivating resiliency during the coronavirus pandemic. It describes the science behind the anxiety that so many of us



Montefiore
DOING MORESM

are feeling right now and teaches coping skills to help us tolerate short-and long-term stress. The video details the language, concepts, and tools we need to maintain our emotional well-being over time and respond calmly in stressful situations.

Virtual Classes by Baptist Health South Florida

Baptist Health South Florida has some excellent resources. Each week, they offer classes on topics such as wellness, meditation, yoga, like dancing, managing anxiety, kid's yoga, and mindful eating.

Anyone can participate in these classes! They are free for all. To access these virtual classes go to the [Baptist Event Webpage](#) and type "virtual" in the Keyword box, then click "more information" for a list of this week's classes.

HWC0M Wellness Website

This webpage is a repository of wellness resources for HWC0M staff, faculty, and administration during the coronavirus pandemic we collectively face. The page will be updated regularly, and we appreciate any contributions. Feedback and ideas for resources can be emailed directly to seminor@fiu.edu. The resource categories include resources for FIU employees; working from home; wellness; physician activity, parents and social distancing. To get to the website, go to medicine.fiu.edu. And, don't forget the interactive [Wellness Wall!](#)

—Suzanne Minor, MD

ABOUT THE EDITOR



Suzanne Minor, MD, is a board-certified family medicine physician and medical educator serving as the Assistant Dean for Faculty Development at the Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (FIU HWCOCM). In this role, she is expanding and implementing a comprehensive clinical faculty development program in a distributed community model of clinical education consisting of numerous institutions and community sites.

Dr. Minor is also overseeing professional development for all faculty at FIU HWCOC. Through educating faculty and students, she strives to cultivate physician resiliency and empower patients. Dr. Minor joined FIU HWCOC in 2010 and was the founding Family Medicine Clerkship Director, crafting and implementing a new curriculum for the clerkship. Additionally, she has been deeply involved in developing full-time and voluntary clinical faculty in multiple domains, including scholarship, pedagogy, and clinical and classroom teaching. Dr. Minor has served as chair of the Steering Committee for the Society for Teachers for Family Medicine (STFM) Group on Medical Student Education and has presented nationally on the topics of the millennial learner; clinical faculty recruitment, retention, and faculty development; home visits as an undergraduate clinical education platform; clerkship director roles and tasks; and mentoring. Peer-reviewed publications include research on family medicine faculty development as well as curricular contributions to the STFM National Clerkship Curriculum Project and narrative medicine pieces in *Family Medicine* and *Pulse*. Dr. Minor completed a Family Medicine Residency at the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Hospital, Miami, Florida and served as Chief Resident. Additionally, Dr. Minor attended the Medical Student Education Development Institute, sponsored by the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Fellowship.

ISSUE 4, 13 APRIL 2020

SEEKING HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Over these last few weeks, many of us find ourselves saying “never in my lifetime” as part of everyday speech more often than we ever had, well, in our lifetimes.

The pace and breadth of the changes upon us can get dizzying. From a historical perspective, though, we have seen some of these changes before. There have been devastating pandemics. There have been rapid and overwhelming economic changes. There have even been mandated episodes of isolation and bans on certain types of social interaction.

Within the ever-changing ups and downs of human existence, the arts and humanities can provide us with other perspectives, including the historical. Literature, history, music, theater, and the visual arts have the power to help us see our common humanity, to reflect on different aspects of the human experience, and, at their best, to offer hope. In Baroque France, Moliere’s farces helped a populace struggling with vast income disparities laugh at their

government, their aristocracy, themselves, and yes, their doctors. At this current moment, who can forget the images of Italians singing regional songs across their balconies? In that spirit, we offer some ideas for potential humanistic diversions.

For the readers among us, consider diving into Jose Saramago's [*Blindness*](#). The tale of an unexpected epidemic of blindness in an unnamed city explores the social breakdown and the darkness, literal and figurative, that emerges. Through its protagonists, it gives hints of where to find lightness as well. For those more drawn to the romantic, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's [*Love in the Time of Cholera*](#) serves as testament to the healing power of love, even with the ever-present threat of an epidemic on the horizon. And, for those who would like to revisit a young adult classic, it is hard to beat the courageous reflections in the [*Diary of Anne Frank*](#). For the writers and visual artists among us, keep an eye out for the e-launch of this year's *Eloquor*, HWCOR's inspiring literary journal, in early May.

For the theater fans among us, join the HWCOR Medical Humanities Interest Group for a Zoom readers' theater event. Over lunch on Thursday, April 16th, we will offer a dramatic reading and discussion of William Carlos Williams' powerful short story, "A Face of Stone." Keep an eye out for the invitation.

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD

ISSUE 5, 20 APRIL 2020

RESOURCE EDITION: LIBGUIDE & YOGA

This issue presents two resources that you might find helpful during the coronavirus pandemic. You can also find links to these resources on the [HWCAM Wellness Website](#).

Mental Health & Wellness: Homebound During Coronavirus

The HWCAM Library put together an amazing LibGuide to help faculty and staff with this transition and new way of living. A LibGuide is an organized listing of core, relevant resources about a field into one 24-hour accessible webpage. The **HWCAM Libguide** on mental health and wellness has something for everyone. The topics include physician burnout/stress; dealing with COVID-19 anxiety; staying safe; local, state, and federal resources; resources for families and children working from home; what are infectious diseases; wellness; mindfulness; exercise; cooking and nutrition; gardening and nature; and creativity and hobbies.

Did you know that through the library, you can access tai chi classes online? You can! In the **HWCOC LibGuide**, click “Exercise.” Then in the bottom right of the next screen, click “Mastering Tai Chi.” If you’ve never done this before, just click “Don’t have an account yet? Get started,” which is written in red and on the middle right of the upper screen. Then, log in with your FIU log on information and you have access to tai chi classes!

CorePower Yoga

This webpage offers ten free pre-recorded yoga classes. The shortest class is a five-minute meditation about connection to self. There are four classes that range from 20 to 30 minutes and the rest of the free classes are about an hour. Each class has a different focus, such as cardio, core, or endurance. The link for CorePower Yoga is found on the HWCOC Wellness Website under Resources for Physical Activity

HWCOC Wellness Website

This webpage is updated regularly as new wellness resources are discovered. Feedback, resources, and ideas for resources can be emailed directly to seminor@fiu.edu. To get to the website, go to medicine.fiu.edu and scroll down to click on the link to the website. Or [here is the direct link](#).

Don’t forget the interactive [Wellness Wall!](#)

—Suzanne Minor, MD

AT-HOME PARENTING

ROUTINES, RECESSES & BREAKING ROUTINES

Staying safer at home has carried an unexpected challenge for those of us with school-aged kids: What the heck will I do with the kids all day?

Sure, the school sent instructions for online classes, and sure, those lessons can keep them occupied for a while. But how do we keep them interested, day after day? How can I possibly get my own work done in the meantime?

The talented parents among us have come up with all kinds of solutions, and we thought we would share some of their ideas.

Routines

As long as we are flexible, we all thrive on routines, and that principle is especially true for kids. To the extent we can, reproducing something akin to the routines kids would experience at school can help create more of a school-at-home atmosphere. Ask your kids what the routines are at school and take stabs at replicating them. When are they used to having breakfast, lunch, snacks or recess?

Recess

Speaking of recess, it can help to have dedicated time for play during the day, usually in 15-30-minute blocks. Maybe now is the time to weed out those unused toys and instead highlight the simple toys that the kids can reinvent over and over again. Depending on the age of the kids, blocks, trucks and cars, Legos, dolls, make-believe kitchens and restaurants can offer endless variations. Having a dedicated space in the home for “recess” can make a difference as well.

Breaking Routines

It can also help to mix it up a little, with some “spontaneous” games that you can throw in for surprises. Flatten out one of those extra Amazon boxes you now have around and make a road with markers, ready for cars and a whole new invented city to emerge. Color, color, color. Take those recyclables and use them as the building blocks for a myriad of art projects. Take out the paint and let the kids pour out some of their creative spirit on cereal boxes, egg cartons, and better yet, bubble wrap. Need some cleaning done? Get out that big plastic box and some bubbly soap, and let the kids take a hand at washing. Allow the occasional screen time, but put rules around it. Consider making the kids read for 20 minutes first, and stick to your agreed-upon time limits.

Now might also be a time to resurrect those card or board games you’ve always liked or to try a new one. Find a Clue; build a Monopoly; settle in Catan; or yell Uno! Try to pick a game all can enjoy.

With your own ingenuity, these days might turn out to be great ways to get to know your kids in whole new ways. Good luck! Check out our interactive [Wellness Wall!](#)

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD



ISSUE 7, 4 MAY 2020

RESOURCE EDITION: SETTING UP A WORKSPACE AT HOME TO OPTIMIZE WELLNESS & PRODUCTIVITY

In our transition to remote work, we have moved our workspaces, yet many do not have an ideal home office. We are starting to feel the consequences in terms of mental and physical health, reduced productivity and strain on our families.

We are sharing some resources for setting up your office, how to successfully work from home and office ergonomics. If you can optimize the ergonomics of your office space, you can minimize the physical pain that can accompany working from home!

COVID-19 Working from Home Tips

- [Eight Working from home Hacks to Get You Through Covid-19](#)

- [Coronavirus Working from Home Tips](#)

General Working from Home Tips

- [How to Setup a Home Office You Love: 12 Tips](#)
- [New to Working from Home? 16 Riveters Share their Best Tips & Hacks](#)

Ergonomic Resources

- [Ergonomic and Safety Tips when Working From Home](#)
- [Ergonomic Recommendations for Remote Work](#)
- [Working from home? These hacks may help ease the pain of your home office](#)
- [Working From Home & Proper Ergonomics](#)
- [Cheap ways to make your work-from-home space more ergonomic and better for your back](#)
- FIU Dept. of Environmental Health and Safety, [Ergonomics](#).
- [Workstation Assessment Checklist](#)
- [Remote Workstation Ergonomic Infographic](#)
- View this [short, online training](#) (requires sign-in).

If you are still not comfortable with your setup, submit a [Workstation Ergonomic Assessment Request](#). EH&S will do a virtual ergonomics assessment via Zoom.

—Guest Editor: Tracey Weiler, PhD

GUEST EDITOR

Dr. Tracey Weiler is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Human and Molecular Genetics at HWCOM. She's the Academic Director of the Graduate Certificate in Molecular and Biomedical Sciences (GCP), and the course director for GCP courses on molecular biology and genetics. She's a member of the [American College of Medical Genetics](#), co-chair of the Direct-to-Consumer Genetic Testing Project Group of the [Intersociety Coordinating Committee for Practitioner Education in Genetics](#), and the chair of the [AAMC SGEA SIG](#) "Pathways, Pipelines and Bridges." She has published numerous peer-reviewed papers and presented her work at various national and international conferences.





**IF PEOPLE FIND
THEMSELVES
STRUGGLING AND
WOULD LIKE TO
SPEAK WITH
SOMEONE, CALL
THE OFFICE OF
EMPLOYEE
ASSISTANCE AT
305-348-2469 OR
EMAIL
OEA@FIU.EDU.**

CHALLENGES IN STARTING WITH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

With the ongoing physical distancing guidelines, our lives have become less active in general. One challenge of being stuck inside is starting with some physical activity. Once we have that first step, things become easier.

Recommended Physical Activity for Health

For substantial health benefits, adults should do at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) a week of moderate-intensity, or 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity. Preferably, aerobic activity should be spread throughout the week.

Adults should also do muscle-strengthening activities of moderate or greater intensity and that involve all major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week, as these activities provide additional health benefits.

As I experience the same motivational problems as probably most of you, I am challenging you during the next two weeks. I will upload on my [professional Facebook profile](#) and on the Teams [HWCOW Wellness Wall](#) some muscle-strengthening activities you may do in addition to the aerobic exercises (i.e., brisk walking, etc. on a daily basis).

I will use the simple table below to follow my physical activity and I encourage you to do the same. Among all the participants who upload a video of them being active or this checklist after one week on the Teams HWCOW Wellness Wall, will enter a lottery where you can win one 20 USD and one 10 USD Starbucks gift card. Deadline is May 25, 2020.

	30 min Aerobic	Muscle-Strengthening
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

More is better than less, and something is better than nothing !

—Guest Editor: Noel Barengo, MD, PhD, MPH

GUEST EDITOR



Noël C. Barengo is an Associate Professor in the Division of Medical and Population Health Sciences Education and Research at the Department of Translational Medicine.

He studied at the University of Zurich (Switzerland), the Karolinska Institute (Sweden) and University of Eastern Finland, where he graduated as MD in 1999. Thereafter he completed a Master's in Public Health (2001) and a

PhD in Public Health (2006) at the University of Eastern Finland (former University of Kuopio). He has worked as independent consultant for the Pan-American Health Organization, the ASPIRE center in Qatar, and the Ministries of Health of Argentina, Colombia and Paraguay. Dr. Barengo's primary research interests are prevention and control of diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular diseases. He has published close to 100 scientific publications in peer-reviewed journals and contributed three book chapters (full list available by e-mail). His H index is 29 and by 2020 his publications have received over 5,000 citations.

SETTING UP A WORKSPACE AT HOME THAT OPTIMIZES YOUR WELLNESS AND PRODUCTIVITY

Many of us do not have an ideal office at home. We are starting to feel the consequences in terms of mental and physical health, reduced productivity and strain on our families. Here are some recommendations.

Find a Space to Work

Ideally, you will have a nice desk in an actual office. If not, what space in your home would work best as your interim office?

- Does it have enough desk space?
- Is it off the beaten path(s)? If you have family staying at home with you, can you be in the corner of a room out of the way? What about outside on the deck/patio/balcony? There is fresh air outside!

- Try to separate yourself from the snacks in the kitchen. We want to avoid the “Quarantine 15”!
- Does it have a power source? Find a power strip so that you can plug in your computer, monitor, and all your devices for charging!
- Is your Wi-Fi good enough? Are you close to the router or do you need to upgrade your router or add a Wi-Fi extender?
- Does it have some natural light? Studies show that this makes you happier!
- Can you face the light, rather than have it at your back? If the light is behind you, it shines on your screen making it more difficult to see and causing eye strain. Facing the light also helps people see your face on a Zoom call!

Make it an Office Space.

- Assemble your office supplies/equipment.
- Arrange your space so you have what you need, when you need it.
- Make it safe. Move the cords so people don't trip on them. Find a box to put files in so they aren't on the floor waiting for someone to slip on them!
- Can you put out some plants? They create a peaceful environment, filter the air, help you manage your stress and increase your productivity and efficiency.

Make it Ergonomic

- Do you want a standing desk or a sitting desk? You can use your ironing board. It is adjustable!
- If you are sitting, keep your feet flat on the floor, your knees at 90-120°, your elbows in line with your body, your wrists flat, your monitor at eye level.
- Put a pillow or towel on your chair so your forearms are parallel to your desk. Put another pillow or towel behind your back for lumbar support.
- You can use Amazon shipping boxes for your monitor and books for your feet to optimize height.
- An external keyboard will allow you to put your laptop screen up at eye level.

Check out our interactive [Wellness Wall!](#)

—Guest Editor: Tracey Weiler, PhD



ISSUE 10, 26 MAY 2020

RESOURCE EDITION: EXERCISE

This issue presents two resources that you might find helpful during the coronavirus pandemic. You can also find links to these resources on the [HWCOM Wellness Website](#).

National Health Service Fitness Studio Exercise Videos

The [United Kingdom's National Health Service has an entire webpage](#) devoted to staying active during the pandemic. Their site is now linked to the [HWCOM's Wellness During the Coronavirus Pandemic Website](#) under the *Resources for Physical Activity* tab.

The website offers many free exercise videos, including aerobic activities, strength and resistance workouts, Pilates, and yoga. There are exercises to tone your abs, raise your heart rate, and tone your upper arms. They offer 10- and 12-week workout plans as well as specialized workouts for new mothers (postnatal yoga) and specific health problems (Pilates for back pain). The duration of the videos ranges from 10 to 45 minutes. They have something for everyone!

Yoga with Adriene

[Yoga with Adriene](#) is the talk of our medical students at the COVID-19 testing site, in course small groups, and in student COVID-19 reflection essays! Because of their comments, you can now also find Yoga with Adriene linked to the [HWC&M's Wellness During the Coronavirus Pandemic Website](#) under the *Resources for Physical Activity* tab.

These videos are categorized in several ways on the home page: by duration, by difficulty level or for specific targets (reducing back pain, weight loss and others). You can also select Videos and scroll down to search for a specific title such as Yoga for Writers, Yoga for Focus, Slow Your Roll, Respect and Replenish, or Yoga for Grief. There is a yoga video for almost any intention or situation!

HWC&M Wellness Website

This webpage is updated regularly as new wellness resources are discovered. Feedback and ideas for resources can be emailed directly to seminor@fiu.edu. To get to the website, go to medicine.fiu.edu.

Don't forget the interactive [Wellness Wall!](#)

—Suzanne Minor, MD



**SUMMER
2020**

STAYING FOCUSED AND CALM WHILE WORKING FROM HOME

If you are like me, sometimes by the time of your 4 p.m. Zoom meeting, you might find yourself a bit agitated, irritable, or just plain exhausted. In your prior life, you likely did not stare at a screen, especially with your own image staring back at you, for extended periods. There are, nonetheless, strategies that can help.

Stick to a Routine

As much as possible, try to regularize your work hours. See if you can establish a 9-to-5 like schedule, even at home, with a lunch break. You might even try dressing for work (at least on your top half) to indicate the routine.

Setup a Work Space

Try to indicate a place in your home or apartment that becomes your work zone. Maybe you are already lucky

enough to have a home office. If not, set aside an area that you can make comfortable, practical, and ergonomic. See our [prior Wellness Wire issues](#) on tips for creating ergonomic work areas.

Keep your Commute Time

You might be tempted to use the hours you formerly used for commuting to do more work. Try to keep that time for yourself. Go for a walk or some other form of physical activity. Take a few minutes to meditate with your Headspace app or practice [Yoga with Adriene](#). Start growing an indoor garden. Plants themselves are calming and centering. Dedicate the time to family or a loved one.

Eat Well

Surrounded by your pantry and too many tempting possibilities can be a problem. Be attentive to where, when, and what you eat. If possible, take a proper lunch break and eat something healthy. If preparing food stresses you out, plan ahead to think out easy meals for the day or the week. If preparing meals relaxes or recharges you, then even better.

Stay Social

So maybe you can't be a part of that weekly soccer game or the monthly movie outing, but you can still make the effort to touch base with friends and family. Be thoughtful about setting up short get-togethers and chats. You might not be able to run into people in the break room, but you can reach out to say "hi," every once in a while, to your work colleagues, too.

Blow off Some Steam

Try to preserve your weeknights and weekends to do something you enjoy. Now might be the time to get that home punching bag you always wanted or dive into all those Game of Thrones episodes you missed. You and your kids can build that puzzle that has been staring at you for months. Used to play guitar with some friends? You still can, but it might have to be remote. Let loose a little, so that you can keep calm and, as they say, carry on...

Check out our interactive [Wellness Wall!](#)

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD



ISSUE 12, 8 JUNE 2020

RESOURCE EDITION: EXERCISE

Today's issue is focused on mental well-being during the coronavirus pandemic; all items are on the [HWCOW Wellness Website](#).

Every Mind Matters

In the last Resource Edition of the Wellness Wire, we discussed the National Health Service (NHS) webpage devoted to staying active. Today, we highlight the [NHS website dedicated to mental health](#). This website gives simple and practical advice on a range of ways to have a healthier mind and get more out of life – from how to deal with stress and anxiety, to boosting mood or sleeping better. There's a section dedicated just to wellness during the pandemic. This site was created by Public Health England, approved by the NHS, and endorsed by the Royal College of General Practitioners.

In times of Crisis, a Little Thanks Goes a Long Way

Harvard Business Review articles are often high quality and applicable to many worksites. This article is no exception. It details [five strategies for managers to express their appreciation to employees during the pandemic](#).

The literature has clearly shown that gratitude is a powerful tool for enhancing one's own wellness. I use this with patients often. This article builds on the idea that expressing gratitude enhances one's well-being; particularly in the virtual workplace.

Zoom Zumba

This virtual exercise class is taught by the HWCOM's own Amílcar Castellano and is sponsored by the FIU Wellness and Recreation Center. Zumba is a fitness program that combines Latin and international music with dance moves. Zumba routines incorporate interval training, alternating fast and slow rhythms, and resistance training. Join virtually for this fun and interactive workout! This Zoom class occurs Fridays at 6:30 PM, Saturdays at 10:30 AM, and Sundays at 9:30 AM. The Zoom meeting ID is 353 074 3565.

HWCOM Wellness Website

This webpage is updated regularly as new wellness resources are discovered. Feedback and ideas for resources can be emailed directly to seminor@fiu.edu. To get to the website, go to medicine.fiu.edu.

Don't forget the interactive [Wellness Wall!](#)

—Suzanne Minor, MD

DEVOTED TO THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Perhaps it is because I am a runner and like to hike, but I find myself longing for the outside and appreciate the fact that our dog forces me on several walks daily. It's a great time to do so. With fewer cars and people around, you can hear and see more birds and breathe in cleaner air. Getting outside can also be a way to de-stress, even in an era of physical distancing. Here are ideas for doing so safely..

Think of Others

Making the health of others a priority helps put things in perspective. Act respectfully and recognize that different people have different comfort levels. Bring your face mask with you, so that if you do run into people, you can offer protection. Notice when you are walking toward someone, and move from the sidewalk to the road to maintain your 6-ft. perimeter.

Exercise Caution

Getting outside may be good for you, but do so cautiously. Don't go out if your sick or if you have been around people

who are sick. Maintain physical distancing, trying to keep 6 feet or so away from people. Avoid busy areas and times of day, limit touching your face, and yes, wash your hands. For longer ventures, don't forget your regular outdoor supplies: water, sunblock, and maybe a hat.

Stay Close to Home

Now might not be the ideal time for your dream trip to Machu Pichu or for hiking the Pacific Crest Trail, but there are other options. Walk around the neighborhood or find a spot within about an hour of your home to wander in nature for a bit.

Chill Out

Even if you have been craving to do that triathlon you've always wanted to do, it's not a good time to get hurt. You want to avoid finding yourself in a healthcare facility, if you can. Yes, walk, run, bike, maybe even swim, but make it chill.

Be a Good Steward

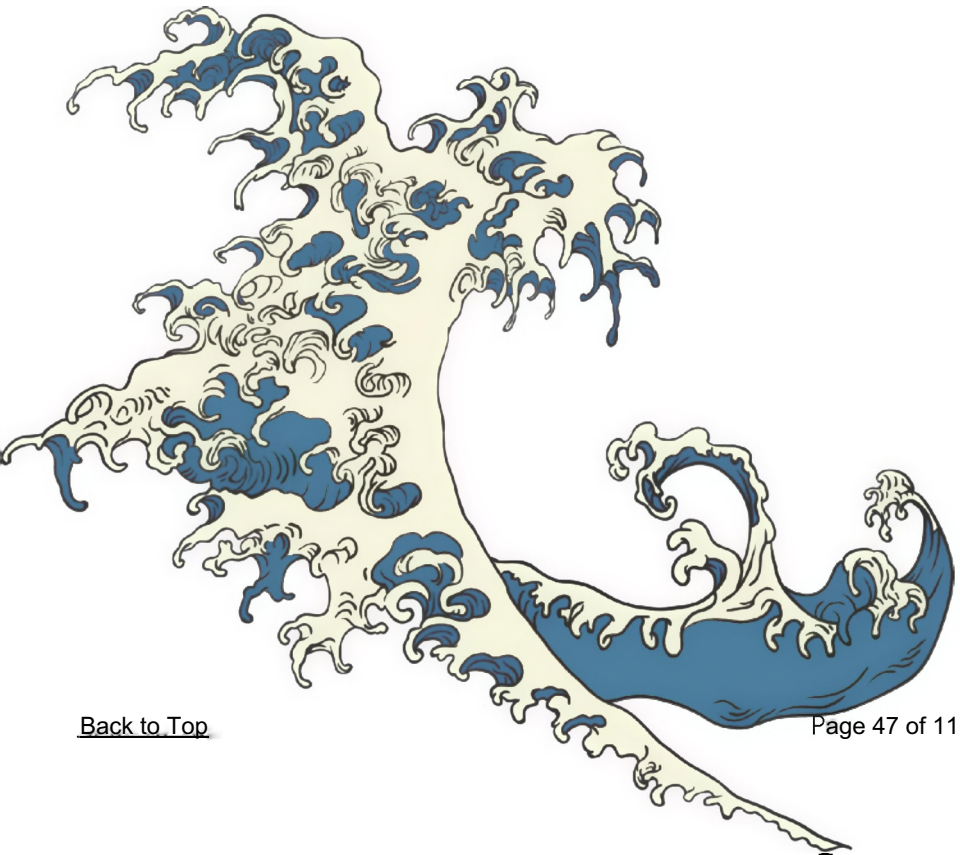
Bringing it back to the idea of respecting others, keep up on the local guidelines and find out what parks are open or closed and what facilities are open or closed. Recognize that park staff might be on limited schedules and cleaning and groundskeeping might be different than before. As they say... *Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints, kill nothing but time.*

For those of you with kids who want to explore the outdoors, all of the same advice applies. Recall, though, that children under two shouldn't wear masks for safety reasons. And be careful what you and your kids touch. Avoid the jungle gym and bring the hand sanitizer. Set up a hand-washing station outside at home and make a plan to clean up before you get back inside.

Getting outdoors might be just the ticket to a healthier life indoors.

Check out our interactive [Wellness Wall](#) !!

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD



A MARATHON STATE OF MIND

When I used to run marathons, there were always moments during a long race when it was a challenge to keep going.

The vast majority of the time those challenges were psychological. Sure, they had a physical component, but the deeper problem was one of motivation and purpose. The ongoing changes to our scenery and schedules, combined with the fear, anxiety and unknowns that come with the coronavirus outbreak, have left many of us feeling as if we are in the midst of an odd work-from-home marathon. We face moments when it is sometimes tougher to keep going. This issue is dedicated to offering some possibilities for reducing stress and isolation for the longer race to come.

Let Home be Home

Since we are spending more time there, it might be a good time to work on projects that make your home brighter. Yes, it might even be time to do a little cleaning. Change that air conditioner filter you always forget about; throw out those vintage knick-knacks. Or it might be a time to set up that music studio you've contemplated. While you're at it, throw

on some music and just dance. Use your kitchen to its full potential; try out a new dish or use that about-to-expire flour to make a cake or two.

Pick up the Pen

If you've ever experienced getting a physical letter, you recognize the joy that it instills. These stay-at-home months might be a great time to become a pen pal. Consider taking a stab at creative writing as well. Don't worry. No one will ever have to see your coronavirus poems or short stories, but they might allow you to express yourself in new ways. Speaking of expanding your mind, putting pen to word puzzles or crosswords might offer new diversions with the added benefit of keeping you sharp.

Contemplate Community

Perhaps there's a way to have a monthly book club or a virtual forum to discuss that Netflix program you and your friends and family are binge watching. It may seem an odd time to think of volunteering, but many non-profits are short of funds and volunteers. There are numerous ways that people can give back, either remotely or in person.

Plan for the Future

This, too, shall pass and when it does, it might be good to have some invigorating plans in place. Keep running; we may not know the exact finish line, but we are all in this race together.

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD

POWERING ON BY SLOWING DOWN

How do we power on when we've slid off track and lost that often elusive momentum? Whether that's working on a health and wellness regimen, personal or professional goal, or to-do list? It can feel frustrating and disappointing when we recognize that we've lost the groove, at least for that moment. This issue highlights the power of efforts for powering on when you've faced a setback and need to build some resilience.

Cafecito Time

The ritualistic café run was as much part of our day when we were on campus as anything we had scheduled in our calendars. The walk to GC or the Green Library provided the opportunity to stretch our legs and get some fresh air into our lungs. It either served as a precursor to our morning and set us off to embrace the rest of the day or provided a reprieve for the long morning stretch and gave us that pick-me-up at noon to power us for the rest of the day.

We can adopt the same practice while in remote mode. Put on your earbuds and take your Zoom call for a walk. Take five minutes to enjoy your home coffee or tea alfresco by walking out to the patio or sitting next to your garden. Adapt the “familiar routine” in your home that helped anchor your day.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU DO EVERY DAY

Micro Habits

Like so many, we've been thrown off our routine. It's likely that any one of us these days is ploughing through the day and on a Zoom sprint while scarfing down a sandwich. Let's say you have a goal on the horizon, but you keep missing the mark. Consider just showing up for some initial step. Instead of attempting that task in its totality—say that 20-minute workout or that long report that's coming due—consider just beginning the task. If it's working out, just sit on the bike, treadmill, or floor mat and listen to your workout music, even if for 2 minutes. If it's drafting a report, read what you last wrote instead of creating content. Maybe one draft sentence and come back to it. These micro efforts are still a win and can be filed in your success folder.

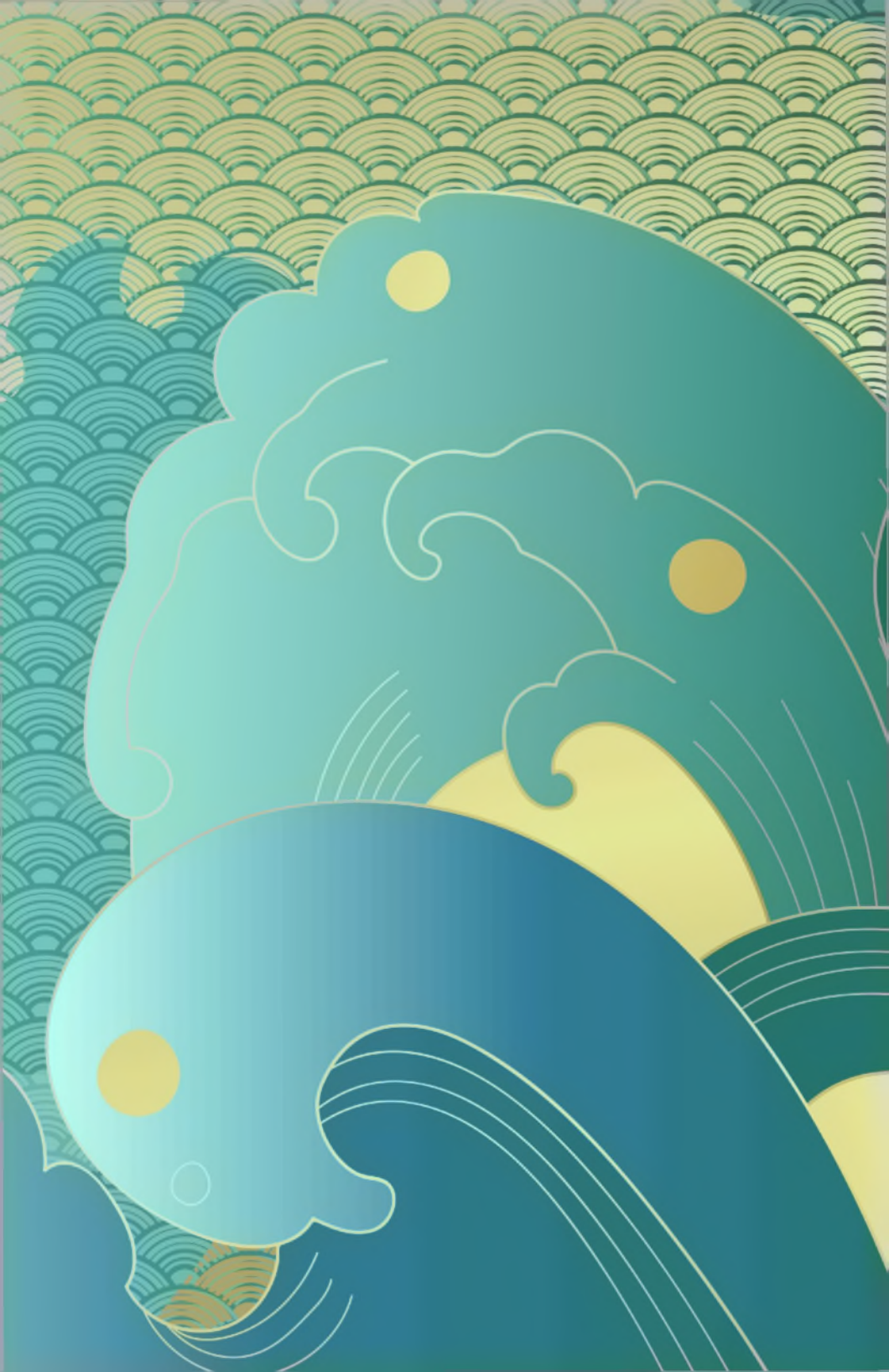
It's the micro habits that we sustain that help build resilience and muscle memory for our deliberate actions and mindset. [This Harvard Business Review article](#) on micro habits outline five steps for getting started.

32 Degrees

Author James Clear in *Atomic Habits*, reminds his readers that ice cube melts when it hits 32 degrees Fahrenheit. The energy required to reach that melting point is just as important as that moment of “breakthrough.” Trust the process. You don't always need to go for that victory lap. Just show up.

Don't forget about our interactive [Wellness Wall!](#)

—Guest Editor: Winnyanne Kunkle, MBA



**FALL
2020**

GUEST EDITOR

Winyanne Kunkle is the Director of IT and Emerging Technologies at HWCOR. She received her BBA in management information systems and MBA focused on health services at FIU. She's currently pursuing her doctoral degree in information systems at Nova Southeastern University. Her dissertation involves investigating the user experience among medical students in the use of 3D virtual anatomy systems. She also examined use of wearable devices focused on user-experience and adoption.

Ms. Kunkle has served an integral role in the development of the IT department's functional units from help desk to application development and oversight of short- and long-term strategic initiatives. She provides the direction on the evaluation, selection, implementation, and adoption and training of new technologies including enterprise information systems and applications, educational technologies and client computing tools based on the academic, clinical, and operational needs of the college and health practice.



REPOPULATION EDITION

According to long-standing psychological theory, stress is usually increased by unpredictability and a reduced sense of control. Sound familiar? The question of when we will be re-opening and what that means has been on pretty much everyone's mind. Christian Morgenstien writes about intra-psychic phases in a disaster. We are apparently in the "re-integration phase."

Anticipation of going back to our "new normal" will likely trigger different feelings depending on who we are. For some, there may be some "anticipatory anxiety." Such anxiety can be readily ameliorated by shifting your future attention to positive thoughts that make sense for you. I asked different people what they felt about going back to the workplace and I got extremely different responses, ranging from "terrified" to "can't wait." Most fell somewhere in the middle, i.e., ambivalent. Below are some suggestions to consider, in order to make this phase more positive and to create hope.

Choose your new office plant; you can nurture it at home until we go back. Water your old office plant or dispose of its remains.

Didn't miss the commute? **Decide on your next great audible book or playlist.** Get your car serviced and finally get that punctured tire fixed.

Choose your face coverings and get comfortable with them. Montreal Canadian coverings are currently cool and the latest fashion:

Plan your FIU walking route in your mind's eye. FIU is beautiful and this visualization will have subtle effects on you now and in the future.

Be grateful for the positive things that have occurred during the pandemic. (This one's tough.)

While on ZOOM for the past 5+ months, did you come across anyone intriguing? Why not reach out and **plan a safe cafecito meeting?**

Reflect on what you learned about yourself during your time away; write it down.

If you are able, arrange to have Zoom connectivity and a camera on your desktop at work.

Try not to focus on things that are out of your control. (Remember the serenity prayer.)

We have all been "traumatized" to some extent. Respect that everyone deals with things differently. **Be kind and gentle with yourself and others.**

Don't worry about the COVID 10 or 15 lbs. that you gained... most of us did... leaving me wondering if they figured that into the physical distancing equations. Jose?

Smile, even if you are wearing a mask. You'll feel better and at least your eyes will look happy.

Make healthy choices.

We look forward to seeing you all again and feeling your positive energy. We have missed you.

Don't forget about our interactive [Wellness Wall!](#)

—Guest Editor: Heidi von Harscher, PhD



GUEST EDITOR

Heidi von Harscher joined HWCOC as the founding Director of Counseling and Wellness in the Office of Student Affairs. She oversees the wellness programs for medical students and is also the assistant dean for the office of Women in Medicine and Science, student Ombudsman and the director of medical student support services. She serves as the faculty advisor for the American Medical Women's Association and the Wellness, Health, Outreach, Love and Expression organization.



Her pioneering contributions include developing a neuropsychological testing program, an APA accredited pre-doctoral internship program and administering a psychological services center for the students at the Biscayne Bay Campus. She has held faculty appointments with the College of Public Health, the Psychology Department and the College of Education at various universities. She holds Certifications and Diplomates in pharmacopsychology, severe mental illness and (neuro) biofeedback.

ISSUE 18, 5 OCTOBER 2020

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

Reflecting on these last six months since the declaration of a national emergency, it is staggering how much our lives have changed. From our morning coffee to our bedtime ritual, practically every aspect of our lives has been affected in some way, whether because of the new app we must use or the mask we must wear. And many of us are the lucky ones.

We haven't lost our jobs or our access to food or our health. I sometimes wonder if I have lost some of my sanity, but that's another matter. Whether we consider ourselves lucky or not, I hazard to guess that all of us have faced adversity these last months and are dealing with loss or grief of one kind or another. Grappling with adversity is perhaps the defining aspect of 2020. How we emerge from that adversity will shape our lives in the years to come.

For whatever reason, I have found myself thinking about Buddhism a lot recently. In what have been called the **Four Noble Truths of the Buddha**, there are the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the end of suffering, and the truth of the path that leads to the

end of suffering. The cause of suffering, it turns out, is our desire, and the challenge of a human life lies in how we handle our desires, especially when frustrated. Although I am not sure how the Buddha would have handled the pandemic, we do have some insight into ways of managing our frustrated desires and other setbacks. In no particular order, I have listed some strategies that contemporary psychologists (and maybe the Buddha) would recommend.

- Surround yourself with positive, supportive, and encouraging people.
- Write, whether it be a journal entry, a poem, or a short story.
- Be in nature.
- Invest in yourself, be it through reading, developing some new talent, or rediscovering an old one.
- Practice self-control.
- Don't let your current beliefs and habits become dogma and let yourself be open to new ideas.
- Come to terms with your anxieties as best you can, trying to examine them head on and get to the root of the worry.
- Practice integrity.
- Get outside your comfort zone.
- Invest in the relationships that give your life meaning.

- Take lessons from your failures and think of ways you can move forward differently next time.

Depending on the tradition, it is disputed whether the Buddha laughed, but I have always been partial to the smiling Buddha myself. It strikes me that a good laugh, a compassionate laugh that acknowledges the joys and sorrows of life, might be the best antidote for adversity of all.

Don't forget about our interactive [Wellness Wall!](#)

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD

RESOURCES FOR OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

Laughter may be the best medicine...Let's explore a few resources around this idea of healing laughter.

Stress Relief from Laughter

The Mayo Clinic offers a patient education handout about [Stress Relief from Laughter](#) detailing the short- and long-term benefits and effects of laughter. Laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs and muscles, and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain. Laughter can also stimulate circulation and aid muscle relaxation, both of which can help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress. Laughter may ease pain by causing the body to produce its own natural painkillers. Laughter can also make it easier to cope with difficult situations and helps you connect with other people.

Being an Artisan of Joy

The article entitled [On Being an Artisan of Joy](#) is short but full of insights. Laughing at oneself and one's own imperfections and not taking oneself too seriously can allow

you to befriend your imperfections and to grow. Laughter is the voice of self-compassion and helps you to gain new perspective.

Healing Through Humor

The [University of Michigan](#) offers strategies to laugh more. My favorite recommendation is: Surround yourself with humor. An Internet search for "stupid pet tricks" or "funniest home movies" will give you, as well as the people you care for or the people who care for you, plenty to laugh at.

The Healing Power of Laughter

This [article from the Journal of Hospital Medicine entitled The Healing Power of Laughter](#) offers some specific strategies to bring out our giggles! Some of the ideas sounds promising, although I am not necessarily advocating for blanket adoption of these suggestions. We should not walk around smiling if we are not feeling it; there may be gender or cultural influences on our smiling levels or the situation may not call for smiling. Also, physicians may swallow emotions at times and cover them up with a smile.

There may be, nevertheless, strategies that you can apply in your life. For instance, have you considered planning silly times? Are there silly words that you can be your belly laugh triggers over the weekend? What are your silly words? How can you be a good sport today? How can you celebrate success and fun in your day today?

—Suzanne Minor, MD



**WINTER
2020**

ISSUE 19, 2 NOVEMBER 2020

THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

Music has the capability to alter events, moods, appetites, physical spaces, you name it.

My wife works for a non-profit immigration law firm. As you might imagine, times are tough for such an organization. About a month ago, she wanted to repaint her office at work, but there were no funds available. So we decided to take the project on ourselves. Armed with face masks, paint, brushes, tarps, other painting accoutrements purchased at Home Depot, and clothes we didn't mind getting tarnished, we spent one Saturday redoing the office in new coats of pure white. I have always found physical work like painting itself therapeutic, but there was one piece of the puzzle that made the whole experience. We brought music to our little do-it-yourself day. "Killing Me Softly," "The Rhythm of the Night," and other classics from our 90s dance music mix somehow transformed the event. Music, it seems, has the capability to alter events, moods, appetites, physical spaces, you name it.

In the Renaissance, when all life in the West took on new levels of complexity, many leading intellectuals of the day were convinced the key to the whole structure of the universe lay in music, the "Music of the Spheres." Music, with its mathematical underpinning and its transcendent

power, combined with its physicality, struck philosophers and poets alike as a leading candidate for the force that animated the cosmos. The musicians of the day, spurred by the intellectual and artistic rebirth surrounding them, began experimenting. They even started making use of the dreaded “tritone,” also known as the Devil’s interval. (Think “dunh-dunh” from *Jaws* or just about any horror film.) They also invented what comes to be known as counterpoint, which lays the groundwork for all musical harmony and disharmony that follows in the Western World.

Unleashing consonance, dissonance, and the tritone also unleashed the full emotional power of music, leading through a very tortuous history to the wide range of music today. Whether you are drawn to hip-hop, techno, punk, or country music yourself, that music all has some of its roots in those heady Renaissance days. Faced as we are by so many challenges, from a pandemic to an economic slowdown to the dangers of stay-at-home isolation, the current era shares odd resonances with the centuries just before, during, and after the Renaissance. Such upheaval might just spur another worldwide rebirth, and I suspect that music will play a role, heralding the change.

More locally, music may foster rebirths in your own world. Perhaps you need a change in mood, or a way to relax, or a way to motivate. Perhaps you have an urge to express yourself. During these times of upheaval, we have some ideas on the next page on ways that music can help comfort and shape our lives.

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD

ISSUE 20, 7 DECEMBER 2020

FINDING WHOLENESS IN THE HOLIDAYS

In a year filled with absences, adaptations, and adjustments, sometimes it is difficult to even imagine planning for the holidays.

Should I travel? Should we have people over for dinner? Does it even make sense to go to an airport? In our lifetimes, most of us likely never used the words “super-spreader event” before, much less in relation to Thanksgiving. We may crave the end-of-year holidays or we may dread them (or both), but they tap into something deep in all of us as we reflect on a year gone by and contemplate the year to come.

The word “holiday” connotes “holy day” and thus suggests the sacred, but its roots are even more basic. The Old English ‘hal’ means complete, healthy, uninjured, and sound. I suspect that the reason every known culture and society has some kind of holiday stems from the fact that individually and collectively, we seek a time to restore and celebrate wholeness. We yearn for those people and patterns that make our lives healthy and complete.

Approaching that wholeness in a year defined by a pandemic, and in many places including the U.S. by fracture and division, emerges as a challenge. Nevertheless, the

uniqueness of the year may in fact provide an opportunity. Rather than focusing on what cannot have or cannot do, we have a chance to consider those people, places, and events that we do have and treasure. We just might have to imagine new ways of discovering and honoring those treasures.

We can start by acknowledging that the year is different; it just is. "It's 2020" has even become an expression. In this distinctive year, we can reflect on what the holidays mean to us and create distinctive new ways to celebrate that meaning. Dinner might be on Zoom, but for many we care about the people not the screen, not primarily the table setting. "But I like to decorate," you retort. "Decorating shows my creative side; it's how I do something for others." Great, how then can you channel that creativity in new ways? Meanwhile, know your limits and let people know your boundaries. If the thought of travel scares you too much, let your family know. If the thought of another Zoom meeting gives you hives, let your friends know. If you are getting overwhelmed, seek help. When possible, think about the unexpected gifts that 2020 has brought you. "It's 2020" doesn't have to only mean something bad.

Perhaps most importantly, think about what gives you and those you care about joy. How can you express that joy, even if in a new format or a new technology? Striving for wholeness this year may look different, but it's still an ever-present possibility.

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD

RESOLVING 2021

It's been a long time since I have made formal New Year's Resolutions, but every year some new goals sneak into my consciousness.

"I'm going to exercise more." "I'm going keep in touch better with friends." The details change, but these two themes recur: more/different/better exercise and connectedness with friends and family. In general, I have pretty good success on the exercise front, but I falter when it comes to reaching out to others. Why is that? What holds me back? Why do some resolutions succeed while others never get off the ground?

Like most human behaviors, I suspect it's some combination of love and fear, churned through the food processor of reason and emotion. By my crude calculation, fear often trumps love, but love is a much better long-term motivator. Emotion, meanwhile, is far superior to reason as a spur to action (or inaction). It strikes me that the key to resolving is aiming toward something you like/love to do and creating the feeling-state to make it happen.

Forgive yourself

It's OK if you have failed in the past to keep a resolution or even to take the first step. Many years have passed in which

I have not written a single one of my newly declared “monthly letters.” ‘Everybody likes receiving actual written letters,’ my New Year’s self muses. Remind yourself that very few are successful in changing routines the first time around; self-compassion sets a much better state for improvement than self-criticism.

Pick something that’s inherently rewarding

Here’s where the love comes in: Instead of picking the typical goal, like losing weight, think instead about the positive state of being you are seeking. “I want to be healthy and strong” can be a better place to start than “I hate the way I look in the mirror.”

Get specific

Once you’ve found that positive state—“I want to feel rested; I want to feel more connected to friends and family”—then put some meat on the bones. Make it tangible, realistic, and within a reasonable time frame. (Darn those SMART goals we talk about in our Clinical Skills courses: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.) Walking once a week with your family might make a lot more sense than running an Iron Man Marathon. This past year was chock full with enough fear and anxiety for a lifetime. Let’s resolve to make 2021 filled with warmer, care-filled moments, in whatever form gives you inspiration. So go do that 20-minute high intensity workout or have that weekly game of chess with your best friend.

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD

RESOURCES FOR SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTIONS

Let's explore a few resources for successful resolutions.

Self-compassion Resources

We've been working so hard for the last year over the course of this pandemic, making it happen and doing so quite successfully. Many of us may have an inner critic that has pushed us to be so successful. While this may work during crises, in the long run, it's not sustainable. Self-compassion is vital to counter this inner critic, so that we can optimally functioning and have high quality of inner life.

[Kristen Neff, PhD](#) is known for her research into self-compassion. Her webpage defines self-compassion, explores the research around self-compassion, offers practices and trainings to cultivate self-compassion, and tests [your level of self-compassion](#). [Dr. Neff notes that the word compassion literally means “to suffer with”](#) and that having compassion for oneself is no different than having compassion for others. To have compassion for others, you must notice that they are suffering. Compassion involves feeling moved by the others' suffering. This response to

others' suffering may be described as a feeling of warmth, caring, and the desire to help the suffering person in some way. Having compassion also means that you "offer understanding and kindness to others when they fail or make mistakes, rather than judging them harshly" and "you realize that suffering, failure, and imperfection is part of the shared human experience." Thus, the three elements of self-compassion are self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness.

[Dr. Neff also offers guided meditations and exercises](#) that you can do to develop your self-compassion. The guided meditation videos range from five to 24 minutes, so even if you only have a few minutes, you can practice! The eight exercises are practical, concrete assignments with detailed instructions. Examples include: [Exercise 1: How would you treat a friend](#); [Exercise 7: Identifying what we really want](#); and [Exercise 8: Taking care of the caregiver](#).

[Another excellent article on self-compassion](#) describes some specific tips you can use to divert or quiet our inner critic. One of the tips is to use the "VARY" acronym devised by psychoanalyst Nina Savelle-Rocklin, PsyD. By validating, acknowledging, and reassuring ourselves, we can reframe that inner critical voice.

Resolution Resources

Now that we've taken a deep dive into self-compassion, let's detail some resolution resources! At the HWCOM, we teach our students about how to use the tools of motivational interviewing to assist patients in setting and achieving

goals. As I read through these resources, I was struck by how similar many of them are!

This [article from the American Psychological Association](#) encourages us to start small and change just one behavior at a time. “By making your resolutions realistic, there is a greater chance that you will keep them throughout the year, incorporating healthy behavior into your everyday life.”

This [article from Very Well Mind explains ten psychological strategies](#) for helping you to stick to your goals. By focusing our goals and planning ahead, we can increase our success with following through and achieving them.

This [Lifhack article describes ten tips for making your new year's resolutions come true](#). One tip is to push yourself by not setting limits for yourself, while another tip reminds you to know when to take a break. Sometimes, finding the balance can take practice!

This [theconversation.com](#) article offers nine tips to give yourself the best shot at sticking to New Year's resolutions. One tip is to be sure to link resolutions to meaningful values. Tapping into what we find important and worthwhile is also a tool that can be useful in staving off burnout!

—Suzanne Minor, MD

TO BE OR NOT TO BE: LIVING WITH UNCERTAINTY

We can all identify with how paralyzing uncertainty can be, especially when our decisions could have life or death consequences.

Among the things that are so striking about Hamlet's famous "To Be or Not To Be" soliloquy is the weight of uncertainty in the Danish prince's life, mind, and words. Yes, the speech is about life, death, and madness, but to my mind, the most poignant aspect of his musings, and the play as a whole, lies in his doubt, uncertainty, and indecisiveness. Faced with a situation he does not fully understand, the burden of presumed leadership, and a wide range of possible actions with unknown outcomes, he remains paralyzed for most of the play. Given this last year, I think we can all identify with how paralyzing uncertainty can be, especially when our decisions could have life or death consequences.

Looked at from other perspectives, though, uncertainty can be oddly liberating. We may not know the answers to any of

the questions plaguing us. When can I travel again? When will the pandemic be over? Will I have a reaction to the vaccine? Yet, we are still in control of our reactions to the questions and our reactions to the feelings they engender in us. Yes, there are even strategies for handling uncertainty itself:

- Disengage from the situation. Sometimes, it helps just to withdraw from the acute uncertainty. It's OK not to know.
- Take slow and deep breaths. Breathe in like you are smelling a batch of cookies and breathe out like blowing out a candle.
- Take on small tasks that you can handle with certainty. Organize that drawer. Solve a little problem. It makes the bigger ones seem less frightening.
- Strive for clarity as opposed to certainty. The reality is that some things just are uncertain, but we can reflect on ourselves, on what we do and do not know, and what we value.
- Reach for connectedness. We are not alone. All of us are facing this uncertainty, and this pandemic, together. Remember to reach out.
- Be kind to yourself.

THIS IS JUST TO SAY

**I HAVE EATEN THE PLUMS THAT
WERE IN THE ICEBOX**

**AND WHICH YOU WERE
PROBABLY SAVING FOR
BREAKFAST**

**FORGIVE ME THEY WERE
DELICIOUS SO SWEET AND SO
COLD**

William Carlos Williams, 1961

It is unfair to reduce Shakespeare's timeless tragedy to a list of psychological tips. The unknowns surrounding major decisions, life, death, and the afterlife are genuinely profound. How we grapple with those unknowns, nevertheless, is equally profound and an opportunity for us to grow and deepen our relationships with others.

"Ignorance is bliss" does not have to be an insult. There may be wisdom and wonder in accepting aspects of what we do not know. Mystery, amidst a world in turmoil, may even breed joy.

Check out our interactive [Wellness Wall!](#)

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD

ISSUE 23, 8 MARCH 2021

THE RHYTHM OF LIFE

For the poet, the very essence of life spills out in the rhythm and ritual of everyday existence.

Every morning, the title character in Jim Jarmusch's film *Paterson* gets up at the same time, kisses his wife, and has the same breakfast bowl of Cheerios. Every day, at the same time, he arrives at the bus station where he works, and composes poems until his supervisor sends him on his route. Every evening, he takes his wife's dog for a walk and stops at a local bar where he has slow conversation with his friend the bartender. All along the way, he observes, absorbing the simple rituals of his life as raw materials for his poetry. Paterson, after all, is not only his name but the name of the town where lives, the lifelong home of William Carlos Williams, perhaps the greatest poet America has ever produced.

I will not ruin the film for you, but small rituals, and the disruption of those rituals, form the core of the story. (If you are interested, it is available on [Amazon Prime](#).) The suggestion seems to be that for the poet, the very essence of life spills out in the rhythm and ritual of everyday existence. It occurs to me that even if we are not poets, life

also spills out in ritual and disrupted ritual. How much we create and treasure those rituals somehow touches upon the deeper, magical, perhaps even sacred aspects of our lives. In a year like we have just had, with so much disruption, reconnecting with patterns and rhythms that help us feel connected can ground us in important ways.

At their core, rituals and ceremonies connect us to people and forces outside of ourselves. They connect us to tradition and to the past: “It’s how we celebrate fill-in-the-blank.” They connect us to one another: “I can’t wait for board game night with my grandkids.” They connect us to our communities: “Go Dolphins!” They even have the power to connect us with nature and the larger universe. May we use this time of disruption to create new rituals and to resurrect old ones that we treasure.

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD

RESOURCES FOR RITUALS

When I think about rituals, I think about those rituals which I have cultivated around my own self-care (or sometimes the lack thereof!) and my pandemic self-care rituals. I think of a ritual as a practice which I consider as having meaning or being sacred.

I have learned that I can really set my day up for success with certain rituals; if I set my intention for the day, read a few pages of a spiritual book and meditate each morning, I can be more mindful, grounded and centered throughout the day. Each time I walk into a complex patient visit, I'm so grateful that I've meditated that morning and can be present to provide best care. Another ritual I embrace many times throughout the day is to mean it when I ask each patient "How can I help you today?" On my drive home, I self-assess, performing one more ritual. What stood out? Where can I grow?

Sometimes, I've needed to create a ritual in my life. When the first new car I'd bought died, I was heartbroken; I was attached to that car and what it had meant in my life. It was not a fabulous car, but it represented growth and freedom in my life. So, it needed a ritual. I said a few words and

threw daisies into Biscayne Bay. To some, this ritual might have seemed silly, but for me it was vital. I told the car how grateful I was for its service and said goodbye.

Useful Resources on Rituals and Wellness

This [Honeycomber article discusses why creating a personal ritual and regularly practicing that ritual is important in our lives](#); these rituals give our lives meaning and are transformative. If you only go to one of these resources, this is the one I recommend. It's elegantly simple and to the point.

This [article from Tiny Buddha discusses six practices that may be useful for those who feel lost](#), which they define as losing track of who we are or how to care for ourselves.

This article from [thriveglobal.com](#) details ten self-care rituals to try out when you are feeling stressed or anxious: healthy cooking, an early morning run, tidying up, decluttering, giving back to the community, stretching, painting, cold showers, stay days, and daily outdoor time. Outdoor time is especially important for me. Feeling the wind on my skin and listening to palm fronds rustling in the wind is so restorative!

This [article from The Art of Living Simple](#) details seven self-care rituals that take less than fifteen minutes. I love the detail of making having a cup of tea or getting dressed into a ritual. And certainly, we can breathe anytime, and we can take three minutes and meditate when we need to throughout our day!

I wanted to include some medicine specific resources as well. This [article from Stanford Medicine](#) details author and physician Abraham Verghese's speech to graduates. Verghese speaks about the ritual of examining the patient, saying "The ritual properly performed earns you a bond with the patient..... The ritual is timeless, and it matters." This reminds me of my examination ritual during this pandemic. There is a moment when I place my stethoscope on the patient's neck and I feel their breath on the back of my hand, coming from the lower aspect of their mask and I marvel at the intimacy and vulnerability of the moment: being a physician allows and propels me to violate physical distancing during the pandemic and this very breath that is life also carries death for so many.

This [article from the journal Perspectives in Biology and Medicine](#) talks about the rituals that exist in medicine through the lens of medical education literature + what is a healing ritual? If you want to do an academic dive into rituals, this is your resource!

—Suzanne Minor, MD



**SPRING
2021**

SUFFERING WITH ONE ANOTHER

As the pandemic enters its middle stage, it seems prudent to remember the power of compassion both for others and for ourselves.

Sometimes, I feel sorry for the second installment in any trilogy. Typically, the middle child is forgotten. The first book or film gets to launch the adventure and the final portion gets to wrap it up in a climactic triumph (or defeat). The central part can get stuck simply carrying the story. Naturally, there are exceptions, *The Godfather, Part II*, is clearly the best movie of the series. (OK, I admit there's room for dispute here.) Similarly, in the book version of the *Lord of the Rings Trilogy*, the middle section, the *Two Towers*, has the distinction of holding what may be the most pivotal moment in the whole story. What makes the episode particularly poignant is that it is small, a simple human act rather than some grand battle or explosive encounter.

What kind of human act? A compelling act of compassion. The protagonist, the hobbit Frodo Baggins and his sidekick Samwise Gamgee discover and capture the deranged creature Gollum, who had been stalking them on their way to Mordor to destroy the powerful One Ring. Gollum had

once possessed the ring, which Frodo now carries, and wants to reclaim it. Sam immediately distrusts Gollum and wants to kill him, but Frodo pities the creature. He has a deeper, more fearful appreciation of the Ring's poisonous sway over its bearer, and can empathize. He understands that Gollum's obsessive, manipulative behavior, in some crucial ways, is not fully his own. Frodo chooses to be merciful to Gollum, releases the creature from restraints, and takes up Gollum's promise to lead the hobbits into Mordor so they can fulfill their quest. Frodo's act of compassion comes back to haunt him but it also allows him to ultimately save the world from tyranny. (Click [here](#) for the filmic portrayal of the scene.)

As the pandemic enters its middle stage, it seems prudent to remember the power of compassion both for others and for ourselves. This invisible disease has held sway over all of us, altering our behaviors, individually and collectively, for good and for ill. We, nevertheless, retain the ability to sustain the best parts of ourselves. We can acknowledge suffering and respond with grace. The very definition of compassion involves "suffering with" another and reacting with a genuine desire to help.

Compassion, decades of evidence now confirm, not only helps manifest beneficence but also is good for our health and the health of others. Honest concern, with an accompanying urge to act, it turns out, is itself therapeutic, no matter the act that follows. Yearning to understand, to forgive, and to comfort may be climactic after all. If Tolkien is correct, the fate of all Middle-earth might depend on it.

RESOURCES FOR COMPASSION

In their 2019 book *Compassionomics: The Revolutionary Scientific Evidence that Caring Makes a Difference*, physicians Stephen Trzeciak and Anthony Mazzealli compile the now decades worth of data that compassion not only is inherently a good thing but has reproducible benefits for both the giver and receiver. Dozens of randomized controlled trials have shown improved health outcomes for patients when they have compassionate caregivers.

Similarly, physicians that patients find compassionate appear to experience less burnout and to provide more cost-effective care. Intriguingly, providers' self-assessments of their levels of compassion show no such associations with health or other outcomes. Doctors seem not as good at estimating their own ability to be compassionate, which likely anyone who has ever been a patient can attest.

While there is a part of me that is saddened that we have to prove compassion is a good thing, another part is excited to learn that such a simple thing turns out to be so effective. I suspect that this news will turn out to apply not only to doctors and patients but to all of us. If we treat ourselves and one another with compassion, we can all experience the advantages.

Trzeciak and Mazzarelli define compassion as “the emotional response to another’s pain or suffering, involving an authentic desire to help” (p. xiii). They distinguish compassion from empathy in that second clause: the authentic desire to help. Empathy involves the emotional response to suffering as well but lacks the desire to help or make a difference. Empathy remains as feeling; compassion involves action.

As we weather the next phase of the pandemic, it might feel like compassion is not necessarily a priority, but it could turn out to be pivotal. You might want to check out Dr. Trzeciak’s own “conversion story” as he went from a measured, objective critical care physician to a champion of compassion: [TEDxPenn](#).

World Happiness Report Shows How We Weathered the Pandemic

Worldwide, this report in [Greater Good Magazine](#) suggests, nations that approached the pandemic with compassion have fared the best so far.

What is Compassion?

[Greater Good Magazine](#) offers a similar definition of compassion as the book mentioned above but also adds the evolutionary evidence behind the practice.

15 Most Interesting Self-Compassion Research Findings

This [article in Positive Psychology](#) emphasizes the benefits of compassion that we direct toward ourselves. When we

accept our own pain and we desire to help ourselves, we can break our patterns of anxiety and insecurity, among other things.

The Scientific Benefits of Self-Compassion

In the same spirit as the article just cited, this [piece from Stanford Health](#) gathers the accumulating data on how self-compassion can help us through challenges.

Thank you to Suzie Minor, MD, for these resource ideas.

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD

STRUCTURAL SUPPORT

The strongest buildings rely on internal and external structures to remain sound.

When I was a child, I went through a phase where I wanted to be an architect. One recurrent idea involved a home design in which the centerpiece was a mobile home that locked into the surrounding structure. Together, the building looked like a normal home. The brilliance of the idea (in my pediatric mind) was that for a vacation, you simply had to unlock the RV from the rest of the home and drive off. Even with the missing core, the building would still look like a regular house from the street.

The most difficult part of the design was how to create the supports for the surrounding structure, so that it would remain sturdy and intact, with or without the locked-in Winnebago. Structural support, it turns out, is one of the most challenging aspects of architecture. How do you create an aesthetically pleasing apparatus that can withstand continuous internal forces, like gravity and wind? Such forces can sometimes be stretched to the limit by external events like earthquakes and hurricanes. If the building is to fall, the structural supports should be such

that they can guide whatever they are holding safely to the ground, in the case of an overload.

This past year has felt a lot like the empty shell of a home for many of us (ironically while we were simultaneously all stuck at home). Many of the activities, people, and events that formed the core of our lives were taken from us. We found ourselves stuck within another structure that was being tested by forces internal and external. Would our structural supports hold while we were buffeted by bearing new challenges on the inside and chaotic societal winds on the outside?

Sometimes, we can struggle to admit that we need extra support. Our own internal arches and buttresses are bending. It's OK to reach out to others for help and advice. It's OK to seek counselling. It's OK simply to let people know that you are under stress. The strongest buildings rely on internal and external structures to remain sound.

As we start to imagine ourselves getting in that Winnebago (or more likely that SUV or plane) and going on vacation and other adventures that remind us of our former lives, it is good to think of what gives us strength. If we have the ability, we might even reach out to see if we can offer support to others who might need it more than us. Unlike buildings, we have a wider range of possible supports, and we have each other. Like my imagined mobile-stationary combination home, we are strongest when we remain part of an interconnected whole.

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD

RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT

Support is integral for all of us.

Perusing online dictionaries for ways to characterize support, it struck me that definitions like advocate, assist, or help are the most applicable. Sometimes, we might feel that we can do it all ourselves. Yet, we were not made to function as if we were our own islands. As humans, we are social beings. Not only are we interconnected as a matter of course, we need each other. It is worth repeating – We need each other. We need to be supported and we need to support others as well.

The pandemic has challenged us all and has also revealed some unexpected silver linings. The realization that we need to ask for help and seek support may be one of those silver linings. So many of us give but don't ask for help, which might work for a while. Eventually, though, the tank runs dry and there's nothing left to give.

Support doesn't have to come from social interaction, but it often does. We may not even realize we are receiving support from others. Just today, talking to colleagues in the hallway was a way that I felt supported. Those brief moments of connecting and chatting lifted me. They helped me recognize a source of support that I used to take for

granted but now really cherish (with safe distancing and mask wearing). Sometimes, we need to be more intentional about seeking out support.

[How Social Support Contributes to Psychological Health](#) on [verywellmind.com](#) discusses the importance of social support in our lives. The authors specifically note the link between poor social support and depression, loneliness, and increased risk of alcohol use, cardiovascular disease, depression, and suicide. The article describes three types of social support: emotional, instrumental, and informational. Having social support encourages healthy behaviors, improves coping with stress, and can help with motivation towards achieving goals.

[Creating a Healthier Life](#) is a 22-page online guide to wellness. It offers a concise section regarding “embracing support from others.” I love this phrase. Not only may we need to ask for help from others, we may also need to grab hold of that help and accept it in our lives. Perhaps part of our returning to campus might be that we find our allies in wellness and figuratively embrace each other in support. (Hat tip to Dr. Schneider for sharing these two resources!)

This opinion piece from Inside Higher Education lays out ways that universities can better support their faculty during these times: [Measures to Support Faculty During COVID-19](#). If any of the ideas appeal to you, speak up!

Early on in the pandemic, psychiatrists realized the need for psychological and psychiatric support for physicians and

created the [Physician Support Line](#) providing free, confidential, national, peer support for physicians and medical students. The phone number is 1-888-409-0141. Although the site started for physicians, they have many resources that would benefit anyone: [Resources Page](#).

What kind of support is offered? The site's FAQ states "We offer empathic and active listening, motivational interviewing, supportive therapy, collaborative problem solving, and cognitive behavioral techniques to manage acute stress, panic, depression, and insomnia. We also can help you start processing stressors including but not limited to the Covid-19 pandemic, existing mental health disorders, substance use disorders, family dynamics, childhood or current trauma, grief and loss, and chronic illness." It is hard to think of a more compassionate listing of useful support.

HWCOW Wellness Website

Our own HWCOW web resource, [Wellness During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#), lists many tools that might help support you during this time as well.

—Suzanne Minor, MD



**SUMMER
2021**

WHAT I LEARNED IN JUNIOR HIGH...

If I learned anything in junior high, it is that while we can do things that exclude, we can also do things that help people feel welcome and included.

Perhaps you've been in a Zoom meeting recently, likely with people you don't know quite as well, and you felt like you didn't fit in. The "cool kids" dominated the conversation and shared jokes you didn't quite understand. You weren't even sure why you were there, except perhaps to bring back memories from junior high school, when you were convinced you didn't belong.

The climate of working during a pandemic, especially working so often through a device or computer screen, has upset so many of the assumptions we bring into the office, the classroom, and even the clinic. Overturning those assumptions has exposed more fundamental needs like the simple recognition that we are flawed people (and in my case a bit neurotic) trying our best to work together. When we focus on meeting our most fundamental needs — including a sense of belonging — it can transform the work and school environment. It can foster collaboration, focus, productivity, even peace of mind.

If I learned anything in junior high, it is that while we can do things that exclude, we can also do things that help people feel welcome and included. Certain gestures and behaviors can go a long way. There are those rare souls that embody such ways of being in the world that they make people feel included. They make sure to solicit everyone's input and to recognize others, from a simple greeting to a celebration of other people's successes and achievements. They create connection and camaraderie.

Beyond gestures and behaviors are more profound streams of connection that can help as well. When people are engaged in projects together that have meaning and purpose, not only can it make for better outcomes but it helps bond the participants. Starting by articulating goals, whether for a meeting or for a longer-term endeavor, brings people together around a common enterprise.

In addition to feeling excluded at times in junior high, I also managed to make two of my longest-term friendships. Our bond might have started from the three of us all feeling a bit on the outskirts of the main stream, but it quickly grew from there. Years of running and hiking later, we have all attended each other's weddings, supported each other in different struggles, and reached out to acknowledge small triumphs. Naturally, most of our workplace relationships will not become as connected as long-term friendships, but we can all do what we can to help one another feel welcome and included.

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD

RESOURCES FOR BELONGING

When I think about belonging, two things jump to mind: imposter syndrome and recognizing universality and humanism.

[Imposter syndrome](#) is the “phenomenon where high-achieving individuals are unable to internalize their accomplishments and instead fear that they will be exposed as frauds.”

Imposter Syndrome (IS) has been a constant companion for me throughout my education and career. In some ways, it's been useful in that it has driven me to do a lot! However, it's not actually useful in terms of living a fulfilling life. That voice that's so worried others will figure out that I don't belong is malignant and insatiable. What I find so interesting about IS is that I cannot outrun it. Every accomplishment I make to try to prove it wrong is actually like a hit of an addictive substance, temporarily holding my IS at bay, but I know it's just going to return.

Actions and achievements only seem to feed it. So, I have done a lot of work around it! If I were to look at my accomplishments when listed under somebody else's name, I'd think wow, they've done so much, of course, they belong

in this group. But, when attached to my name, I discount these accomplishments. "[First generation students are particularly susceptible to IS.](#)" That makes a lot of sense with me. No one in my family has been a doctor and my parents were the first in their respective families to go to college.

So, how can we work on our own IS and help our students to work with theirs? This article on [Very Well Mind](#) outlines specific strategies. One of the most effective for me has been to look at my accomplishments as if I was a third party. This is really useful with separating feelings from facts. Another helpful tool outlined here is to call them out and accept these fraudulent feelings; exposing them to the light of day shows them to be the flimsy shadows that they actually are.

This [Winds of Change](#) article also offers tools. They recommend moving beyond talk so that we don't get stuck there. Also, being patient and persistent resonates with me; I love the idea that with patience, I can "embrace" my "awesomeness!"

My favorite tool is knowing that the very recognition of IS means that I'm not an imposter and that I do belong! This [Cleveland Clinic article](#) says it well: "True imposters don't have this feeling."

Many of our students face IS as well. We can help them through [inclusive teaching](#). Being transparent about expectations; using diverse examples; promoting a growth mindset, modeling inclusive language; and striving to be

fair are some strategies offered. Also, high achieving folks with IS talking about their feelings of not belonging can help students know that they are not alone and can serve as role models for working through IS.

Let's talk about humanism and recognizing universality.

This is so important for me to understand that I belong and that I am a part of. We are all humans with similar organs, blood, tissue all based on the same genetic building blocks. We are each unique in how those blocks are laid out, but that doesn't negate our commonalities, our shared humanity. We've been through a rough year plus with politics, the viral pandemic, and our ongoing racism pandemic all shifting tectonically to expose our societal fault lines. We see where we differ. News agencies and political parties have fostered a sense of division. Yet, if we step back and really look at our issues, we actually agree on a lot.

This idea of our shared values can be seen in ranked choice voting. In 2018, I listened to a [podcast](#) that presented a method of voting in which voters rank their votes for each candidate and if no person wins a majority, votes are redistributed when the lowest vote-earner is removed. This technique actually encouraged candidates to move to the middle, where we share a lot of common values!

Years ago, I reviewed [a book about religious traditions](#) and was so impressed with commonalities.

**“THOUGH DETAILS
DIFFERED ACROSS FAITHS,
I APPRECIATED THE
UNIFYING THEMES OF
FORGIVENESS, SUFFERING,
CONSEQUENCES,
RESURRECTION, AND
DEATH AS A NATURAL
PART OF LIFE.”**

In medical school, I experienced a sentinel moment in the gross anatomy lab as I stood looking at the bodies. I realized that beneath varied skin tones were the same muscles, organs, nerves, and vessels. We were all just human. At the end of the day, we all belong because we are all just human.

I carry this value of inclusion into my work at the HWCUM, valuing inclusion, equity, respect, and integrity. I'm so grateful to work with folks sharing these principles. At the end of the day, we are just human.

—Suzanne Minor, MD

ISSUE 27, 19 JULY 2021

AN AWESOME, AWFUL, AWE- INSPIRING YEAR

In 1931, after he had managed to revolutionize science and the way we all think about matter, energy, and time, Albert Einstein paused to write a short reflection for a collection of essays written by famous people called *Living Philosophies*.

Living in Switzerland at the time, he was troubled by the atmosphere in Europe, including the disastrous economic collapse in Germany leading to the rise of new militarist political parties there and a shuffling of power on the continent. He was writing to stand against authoritarian regimes and also to advocate for an approach to life that embraced mystery. As he put it, “The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.” As we reflect on this awesome, awful, awe-inspiring year that has just passed, we too might benefit from opening our eyes to the mystery around us.

Awesome

Before it became a slang word for excellently, awesome connoted something extremely impressive that prompted admiration, even fear. In all those senses, this last year has been awesome. We have faced things seen and unseen that induce fear; but, if you are like me, you have also seen people, actions, and phenomena that can only impress. From birds chirping on quiet roads to colleagues donning protective gear to aid their fellow humans, the year that was brought us moments small and great filled with mystery.

Awful

To be sure, this year just passed brought pain, sorrow, and loss. The other day I saw a man wearing a t-shirt brandishing a Likert scale rating for 2020: “1, would not recommend.” Yet, in those times of fear and grief, there have been moments filled with awe. Small gestures of wonder and appreciation can somehow make the awful tolerable or at least serve as opportunities to marvel at the interconnectedness of our world.

Awe-Inspiring

Amidst all the change and disruption, I have been particularly struck by the recent flourishing of art and science. When before have we seen the international scientific community develop so many effective vaccines so quickly? So many times in this past year, I have been in awe of our students; of their resilience and commitment to our communities, and of my colleagues and their steadfast compassion and dedication. We will likely never fully

understand all that has happened in so little time, but we can take strange comfort in that awe-inspiring unknown.

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD

RESOURCES FOR INSPIRING AWE

It turns out that an Einsteinian approach, embracing life with a sense of mystery and awe, not only can spur art and science but can serve as a source of strength and psychological health.

For the last twenty years, scientists have actually been studying the emotion and its wide-ranging effects. If you are looking for a quick overview of this work, check out this NPR story about the research and benefits of awe: [Awe Appears to be Awfully Beneficial](#). NPR even offers an app called the “[Joy Generator](#),” which includes a set of tools for inculcating awe.

This Psychology Today article, “[The Surprising Power of Seeking a Daily Dose of Awe](#),” highlights how even brief exercises, 15 minutes or so, where people try to step back and stand in awe of what they see, can make a difference. The key, it seems, is focusing on something bigger than

oneself. By doing so, you can stave off loneliness, feel more connected to others, and foster a sense of calm.

If you have never seen the work of the [Greater Good Science Center](#) and [Greater Good Magazine](#), you might want to take a look. This organization, based at the University of California-Berkeley, strives to provide evidence-based resources and information on a purpose-filled life. Here is how they describe themselves: “The Greater Good Science Center studies the psychology, sociology, and neuroscience of well-being, and teaches skills that foster a thriving, resilient, and compassionate society.” Greater Good has several resources related to awe.

This article, on [Eight Reasons Why Awe Makes Your Life Better](#), summarizes some of the crucial findings on how fostering a sense of awe yields gains for those who resonate with the emotion. Overall, the research suggests that awe can make you more connected to those around you, humbler, and healthier. Awe seems to improve your mood, to help people think critically, and even to be less materialistic.

This final article from Greater Good describes some practices that have been shown to inspire awe: [Four Awe-Inspiring Activities](#). From writing about personal experiences to watching an awe-inducing video, from taking an “awe walk” to reading an awe-inspiring story, these four practices are easy enough to weave into our daily lives. Small efforts can lead to big changes and help create an “awesome” life.

3D Street Art Must Be Viewed from the Correct Angle

View From ~~C~~orrect Angle



View from Wrong Angle



Lego Army, Chalk Festival Sarasota 2011, Leon Keer, Street Artist.

View 3D street art at <https://www.julianbeever.net/>

It's all a matter of perspective.

—Gregory M. Schneider, MD

CLOSING REMARKS

Thank you to all who contributed to the creation of the Wellness Wires and this Wellness Wave. We could not have done them without your input and support. You have our deepest appreciation.

Thank you, also, to the Wellness During the Pandemic Working Group for your feedback and ideas for each WeWi (as we affectionately called the Wellness Wire): Wendy Bravo, Winnyanne Kunkle, Dr. Heidi von Harscher, Dr. Noel Barango, and Dr. Tracey Weiler.

In addition, we would like to thank Jessica Giraldo and the HWCOC Instructional Design Team for their skills in bringing this collection of the Wellness Wires to fruition. Thank you to Elaine Khoo for saving each WeWi to the Wellness During the Coronavirus Pandemic Website and to Winnyanne Kunkle for e-distributing the newsletters every month. Finally, we extend our gratitude to the faculty and staff of the College of Medicine, to whom we dedicate this project.

As always, we thank our FIU HWCOC leadership for appreciating that faculty and staff wellness during the pandemic was a vital priority.

We are grateful to have been of service in writing these Wellness Wires and hope that they were useful to you, especially during this challenging pandemic, and may continue to be of use during whatever challenges are yet to come.

—Gregory Schneider, MD, and Suzanne Minor, MD

