



How to Social Distance and not lose your mind!

Presenter: Sister Ronke Tapp, Ph.D., a.k.a. Sistah Doctor

On March 25, 2020, Baber held a virtual conversation on “How to Social Distance and not lose your mind!” Our presenter was our own Sister Ronke Tapp, Ph.D. Sister Tapp is the Assistant Director of Multiculturalism at the University of Rochester’s University Counseling Center and an Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychiatry. Please find these notes and reflection questions from our conversation that will help us to not lose our minds in this season.

1. Introduction on Stress:

- a. COVID-19 has led to increased levels of stress: When will this end? Will we still have a job? What if I become sick? When will kids return to school? It’s stressful to deal with the unknown! This added stress – stress on top of the stress we had before this health crisis – has caused numerous person’s cups to run over.
- b. Stress can manifest itself as muscle tension, nausea, upset stomach, constipation, insomnia, frequent colds, headaches, exhaustion, excessive sleep, etc.
- c. When on an airplane, the attendant instructs travelers to put their mask on first before we attempt to help someone else with their mask. COVID-19 has created a situation where we need put our mask on first!

To explore this more, please watch:

Understanding Stress: A Cup Analogy for Self-Care | Sistah Doctor

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=21&v=uMidcqkEygE&feature=emb_logo

Personal Reflection Question:

What are the healthy ways we have dealt with stress in the past? What are the unhealthy ways we have dealt with stress in the past?

It's important to know the healthy way we handle stress so we can repeat them. It’s also important to know the unhealthy ways we handle stress (caffeine overconsumption, drinking, smoking, overeating, undereating, shopping, etc.) so we can watch out for them and avoid them.

2. **How do we self-care?** “We are a spirit. We have a soul and we live in a body.” So how do we care for our spirit, our soul, and our bodies?
 - a. **How do we care for our spirit?**
 - i. Remain connected with loved ones, friends, church.
 - ii. Pray. Meditate on Scripture and Music.
 - iii. Mindfulness. Mindfulness is a process that makes one aware of their present thoughts, emotions and bodies. For one quick mindfulness exercise, please see: Quick Mindfulness Check-In with Sistah Doctor -- Jazz edition -- 4 min <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxsCi0k2O88>
 - b. **How do we care for our soul (mind, will, emotions)?**
 - i. What do we feed our minds? Just like we put limits on what we feed our bodies we should also put limits on what we feed our minds. Don’t overconsume the news and social media.
 - ii. Acknowledge how you feel. When a child is scarred, we address their fear. We kiss their pain and make it better. We must do the same for ourselves. We can’t overlook, avoid, or ignore how we feel.
 - iii. Remember we are a resilient people. We’ve endured difficult times before and survived. We will survive COVID-19.
 - c. **How do we care for our bodies?** How do we release the tension that stress has built up in our bodies? How do we strengthen our immune system?
 - i. **Progressive Muscle Relaxation.** This is a technique where one tenses a muscle and then relaxes that muscle in order to release anxiety. For more information, please see: How to do Progressive Muscle Relaxation | Therapist Aide <https://youtu.be/1nZEdqcGVzo>
 - ii. **Breathe.** Take deep breaths so that our bodies can recalibrate. Make sure the time we exhale is more than the time we inhale. Some exercises can be seen here: Managing Anxiety: Breathing Exercise Amid COVID-19 | UC San Diego Health <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAdwqHl7sac>
 - iii. **Exercise.** Take a walk. Dance. Clean the house. Play with the kids. Remember social isolation doesn’t mean we can’t be outside.
 - iv. **Eat Healthy.**
 - v. **Good Sleep.** Don’t watch television or scroll social media before bed. Instead read a book, listen to music, or use apps such as Liberate (see more at liberatemeditate.com - this one is specific to people of color) to calm ourselves down. Other apps include Headspace, Calm, Relax Melodies, ‘Stop, Breathe, & Think’, etc.

Personal Reflection Question:

What are other possible options to care for our souls, spirits, and bodies?

3. How do we remain connected?

- a. **Use Technology** – Video conference services such as www.Zoom.us, Skype, FaceTime, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp, and Facebook allow us to see each other face-to-face which helps to reduce the throb of isolation.
- b. **Use Telephone** – The telephone still works. Social distance doesn't mean we have to be disconnected.
- c. **Resources for children** – Facebook has created a video chat and messaging app for children called Messenger Kids. This allows parents to control the children's account through their account and control the child's contact list.
- d. **Share skills, activism, crafts, recipes, etc. with someone else**

Personal Reflection Question:

When was another moment that life felt out of control? What resources helped you survive the last time your life felt out of control?

Other Resources

Coping Through Coronavirus

https://vimeo.com/400448203?fbclid=IwAR3Nms1_G_NB96QZvwY7rWqJ2eoeVfg2FoF3ZV6z5AVN8cQErrVxKkbvN6M

Supporting Children in the Struggle Against COVID-19

<https://embracerace.us12.list-manage.com/track/click?u=3454f4b864e532ab860c2df7c&id=b9e1c30e37&e=9d4adde8c3>

COVID-19 Emotional Support Hotline

This hotline provides free and confidential support to callers with increased anxiety due to the Coronavirus. There are over 6,000 mental health professionals who staff this line for free. The hotline number is 1 (844) 863-9314

Sistah Doctor

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