A Journey Through COVID-19

May 4, 2020 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

When the reality of COVID-19 dawned on me, I spent a week riveted to various news sources. Anxiety overtook all good sense, and I had more than a few fitful nights. Meditating felt like a waste of time. I was not motivated to exercise on my own, and basically I became a shining example of what NOT to do during a pandemic.

Eventually, good sense kicked in, and I went on long walks, set the meditation timer, and stopped watching news in the evening. I began to relax, my sleep improved, and my husband could safely live under the same roof with me.

This good behavior lasted for a short while, and then I watched dead bodies piling up in New York, thought about all the people I know there, and got scared again. I reviewed my end-of-life wishes with my family, ate a half a loaf of homemade bread, and used the rainy weather as an excuse not to walk. When my sleep got messy again, I knew I was in trouble.

I have repeated this pattern many times in my life and have gotten identical results. It's a simple equation: When I don't take care of myself, I don't feel well. When I take care of myself, I am much better off. Even (and especially) when I have a disease, illness or injury, taking care of myself yields better results than blowing off self-care.

The good news is that in both instances, I got back on the health wagon fairly quickly. After the second bout of self-care disobedience, I decided to write down guidelines for self-care. I call it my COVID RDAs (recommended daily activities). These include:

- Meditate twice daily (I do this first thing in the morning and at noon)
- Walk daily (I aim for 45 minutes to an hour)
- Do planks, sit-ups and push-ups daily
- Strengthening exercises three times weekly
- Yoga three times weekly
- Don't look at news in the evening
- Write a gratitude list at bedtime

Generally, I've lived up to my intentions except for the strengthening and yoga. These are hit or

miss because they aren’t daily. I need to set smaller goals for these two activities, find other ways to incorporate them in to my life, or let them go.

I may sound smug by listing my COVID RDAs, and if so, let me assure you that my intention is not to win any congratulations from my readers. I have my dark history too. At one point in my life, I was mired in alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. I didn’t sleep or exercise, and my diet was pretty awful. What changed? I got sick and tired of being sick and tired. Feeling crappy is a great motivator, and still works for me. With practice, I don’t fall off the health wagon for long, and my good habits don’t unravel all that much.

I used to think that if I could change, anyone could. That is egotistical thinking. Change comes from a deeper part, and we all are on different journeys together. Still, we journey together, no matter where we are headed. COVID-19 is going to be with us for awhile, so if we can assist each other in reaching our health goals, we may all arrive at the same destination—staying alive, hopefully with joy and kindness in our hearts.

I invite you to help me be accountable, and I offer my support to you. If there is anything I can do to help you on your journey through the valley of COVID, please ask. Hope to see you at the bottom of the coronavirus curve.

If you want to read more about COVID-19 or other health-related issues, I am also blogging at LucindaPorterRN.com.

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