

To the UW Medicine Community:

And then the smoke rolled in...

The challenges of this year don't seem to let up and, for over a week, we have been stuck inside staring at a haze that just won't blow away. It is as if the threats in the air that have caused anxiety for months have suddenly been made visible. With the loss of time outdoors, many of us have found our well-being coping strategies disrupted. We have also experienced what confinement indoors feels like with kiddos and family members at home all day. The challenges of this past week show us just how important it will be to develop strategies for facing the autumn and winter.

Peer and Mental Health Support: Many of our healthcare team members know how to be "fine" and white-knuckle their way through incredible challenges. We have been trained to be okay. Knowing how hard the stress, uncertainty and loss of control is on all of us now, we want to encourage you to seek out the supports around you. From a [Peer Support](#) session as you come off service or off a shift to a free [supportive conversation](#) with our Psychiatry clinician colleagues — we are here to help. We want to normalize the experience of stress and distress around us and encourage everyone in our community to connect with support now and in the darker, colder months to come.

Several emergency medicine organizations have come together to name Sept. 17 [National Physicians Suicide Awareness Day](#). The goal is to remind us how essential it is to create a space that is safe to talk about mental health and support each other as we acknowledge the impact our work can have. We know these emotions can affect all members of our community and strive to normalize these discussions. In addition to opening up to one another, we encourage folks to take advantage of our employee assistance program, [UW CareLink](#), or if need is more pressing, to call the [National Suicide Prevention hotline](#). It is okay to acknowledge just how hard this time is and to give and receive support now and into the future.

Town Halls: We will continue to gather as a community to share information and answer your [questions](#) during our Town Halls. Our next Town Hall will be Friday, [Sept. 18 at 3 p.m.](#)

Mindful Healthcare Summit (Oct. 1-5): Registration is now open for this FREE online event for medical professionals which will offer mindfulness, self-compassion and compassion practices for staying grounded, resilient and connected to our deeper inspiration during these challenging times. Leading neuroscience researchers, mindfulness experts and dedicated medical professionals will explore the science of mindfulness and teach evidence-based tools to support clinician well-being, improve patient care and foster mindful teams. Learn more about the speakers, or sign up for free [here](#).

Caring for Self and Family: For the most up to date information on child and eldercare supports, please continue to check our central [UW Human Resources page](#).

The winds will come and we will see the sun again. In these moments of darkness, please reach out and take good care of yourselves and each other.

With gratitude,

Anne Browning, PhD

Assistant Dean for Well-Being, UW School of Medicine

Founding Director, UW Resilience Lab

Affiliate Assistant Professor, UW College of Education

Patricia Kritek, MD, EdM

Associate Dean – Faculty Affairs

Professor - Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine

University of Washington School of Medicine