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To the UW Medicine Community:

The vaccine has arrived, and with it, growing hope that there is an end in sight to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on our healthcare teams and our broader community.

At the same time — the virus continues to rage around us. We're still feeling uncertain, exhausted, overwhelmed — and often alone.

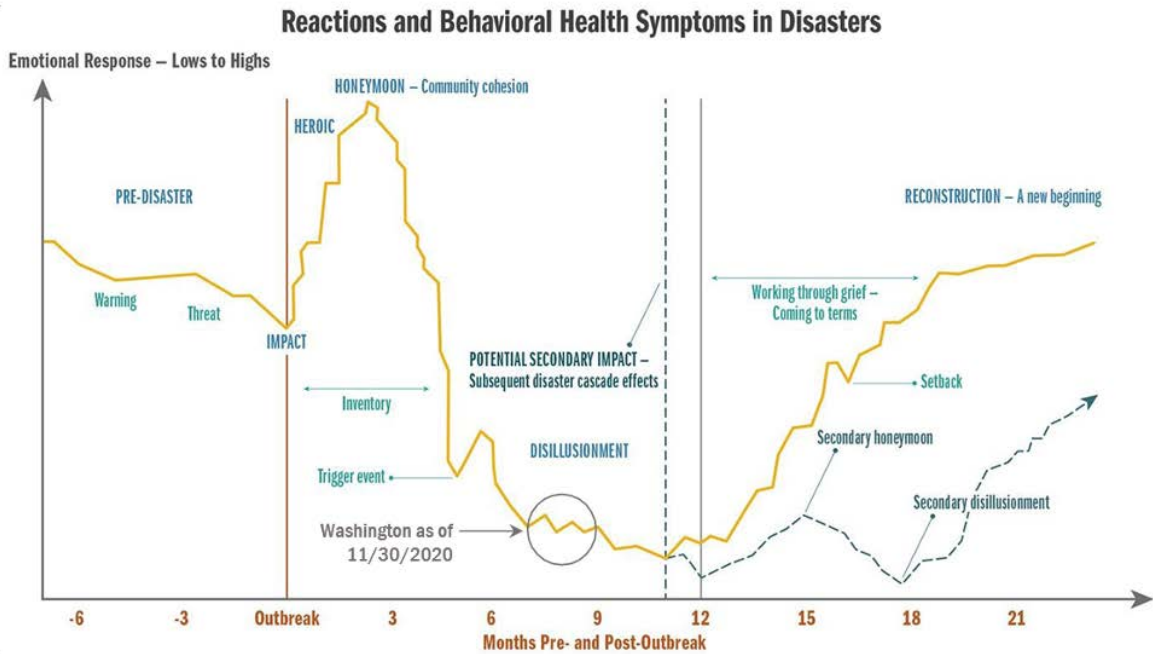
Many of you have shared how challenging it can feel to process what feels like a groundswell of positivity around us as many continue to face the impacts of COVID-19 head on — including disruptions to our own rhythms of life. We yearn for hugs, barbecues, break room snacks, the simple smile of acknowledgement on the face of a stranger we pass in the street. We're working long hours during the shortest days of the year without the milestones we counted on to break up the monotony of winter.

But make no mistake — there's strength in that growing sense of hope, and the enduring sense of “we” that connects our UW Medicine community. No matter the intense challenges we face during this crisis response or that we'll continue to face over the next weeks and months, that collective hope, resolve and mutual support will be increasingly important to help us move through to the far side of this pandemic. We will get there — we just have to keep going together...

**Check the forecast, and prepare for the “weather.”**

If you're having a tough time now and your personal weather feels stormy, you're not alone. It is normal and knowing what the forecast looks like can be helpful to take care of ourselves. The [Washington State Department of Health's Behavioral Health forecast](#) update from the end of November highlights the challenges we will have to our individual and collective well-being as we respond to this next wave of the pandemic without having time to recover fully from previous waves:

## Reactions and Behavioral Health Systems in Disasters



The graph above indicates how our recovery could be extended with the impacts of the current wave of infections in our state. Please be aware of your own physical, social and mental health during this time and use the [Peer to Peer Program](#), [supportive conversations](#) offered by the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and [CareLink](#) for support.

**Join us this week for live lunchtime restorative sessions to support your well-being.**

### **Wednesday, Dec. 16: Release, Relax and Refuel: Meditation as Gym for the Mind and Body**

A series of several short meditations that can be done anytime throughout the day to release stress, combat fatigue and refuel. Led by Blair Carleton, UW Center for Child and Family Well-Being, from noon to 12:30 p.m. via Zoom: <https://gbhi.zoom.us/j/96213926819>.

### **Thursday, Dec. 17: Pause and Take a Breather**

Join us for a pause midday to practice simple breathing exercises you can carry into your day to help relax and reconnect with yourself. Led by Lenna Liu, MD, professor of Pediatrics, UW School of Medicine and pediatrician, Odessa Brown Children's Clinic, from noon to 12:30 p.m. via Zoom: <https://gbhi.zoom.us/j/97825770736>.

**Friday, Dec. 18: Release, Relax and Resource: Meditation as Spa Time for the Mind and Body**

A series of short meditations to release stress, create a sense of calm, foster resilience and maybe even have a bit of fun. Led by Blair Carleton, UW Center for Child and Family Well-Being, from noon to 12:30 p.m. via Zoom: <https://gbhi.zoom.us/j/95034393438>.

While we have talked about sprinting marathons, a [colleague recently pointed out how our COVID-19 response is not a marathon run by an individual, it is a 200-mile relay run with multiple handoffs](#). Some of us are playing crucial roles in the support van, some can manage a couple miles given the current conditions while others can run for ten or more. But we keep running together, passing the baton to the next person up, supporting each other over the miles. So friends, you are not running alone. You are a part of a really big relay team that will last the distance, together. We are so grateful to be running with all of you. Thank you for everything you are doing to help our team move the baton forward. It will take all of us to travel the miles ahead.

With gratitude,

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