

## To the UW Medicine Community,

Thankfully, COVID-19 numbers continue to fall. We are approaching a better place – the tail end of a very big wave that brings a relaxing of local restrictions and a chance to resume activities that bring us joy and connection. Sadly, as has happened throughout the pandemic, at a time when it feels a bit brighter, we have also felt the impact of challenges beyond COVID-19.

Right now, we are holding close our colleagues, friends and family who are connected to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. The Russian government's recent attack marks the first invasion of a sovereign nation of this scope in Europe since World War II. The instability caused by an attack of this magnitude has raised anxiety and fear among people across the region and beyond.

This week, we also witnessed an unprecedented escalation in the ongoing, nationwide efforts to ostracize trans youth and their caregivers, one that targets some of the most trusted members of a child's support system: parents, caregivers, teachers, and healthcare providers.

As we are trying to grapple with actions that we struggle to make sense of, both within our borders and abroad, we have a growing sense that “over there” is never that far away anymore as we are all impacted. What happens globally affects us locally.

Interconnection, navigating dissonant realities, and the limits of what is in our sphere of control – these elements are a recipe for feeling overwhelmed and are only exacerbated by the 24-hour news cycle we live in, rife with content written to capture our attention and devices designed for us to stay glued to them.

## How can you keep from getting overwhelmed by news and social media?

It can be hard to disconnect and find moments of calm. Consider these recommendations:

1. **Turn off your news and social media notifications** so that your device will not disrupt you until you want to engage with it.
2. **Pause before reading an article or watching a video** and ask yourself, “will this make me feel better? Or will this likely make me feel worse?” Give yourself permission to not read or view material that will cause you to feel overwhelmed.
3. **Do your best to avoid “doom-scrolling” through media** looking for some

meaningful new content. Consider focusing on one or two trusted news sources and only visiting them once or twice a day at most.

Finding the energy to hold and care for others when we are already feeling depleted ourselves is hard. This has been a long two years of the pandemic with new stressors piling on top of the old. If you are feeling overwhelmed, you are far from alone. Consider reaching out to [UW Medicine's Peer Support Program](#) to find a colleague who is happy to listen. Looking for more support? Leverage our [Employee Mental Health Program](#) to get connected to a licensed provider. We have also compiled a [list of community mental health providers](#) whom you can contact directly.

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As we move into spring, we will offer several opportunities for reflection, skill development, and growth.

### **Spring Well-Being & Resilience Series**

Register for one or all of these events:

- **April 4:** [Compassion, Empathy, and Pursuing Kindness to Ourselves](#)
- **May 2:** [Exploring Gratitude: Positive Emotions and Expansive Thinking](#)
- **June 6:** [Coping with Uncertainty: Effects of Chronic and Acute Stress on Well-Being](#)

### **Trauma Stewardship Institute Workshop**

We are partnering with Laura van Dernoot Lipsky and the Trauma Stewardship Institute to address the accumulative toll of the pandemic on UW Medicine healthcare staff and providers through a 2-hour system-wide workshop. This interactive training will offer practical tools to help us individually and collectively sustain the challenges of trauma, secondary trauma and the sense of being overwhelmed. Whether the trauma is related to our work, our personal lives, the pandemic or systematic oppression, we will discuss impacts as well as strategies for supporting ourselves and each other. The workshop will be offered in March and June. Recordings will be posted online for those unable to attend live.

- **March 23**, 1-3 p.m. [Register here](#)
  - **June 20**, 1-3 p.m. [Register here](#)
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While the realities of our world can leave us feeling like there isn't much to celebrate, we know that moments of calm in the storm of COVID-19 can be fleeting and that for our own well-being, we need to take advantage of this time to recharge, reconnect, and find the joy in the longer days and the emergence of spring. Give yourself the gift of finding moments of quiet amidst the noise around us and to catch the beauty we too often pass by without noticing. These early moments of spring, when our world outside seems to come alive again, always fills us with joy and hope (and lots of photos of things in bloom that we text to each other).

Though it can be a challenge at times like these, find what you see as beautiful and

hopeful in your world.

With gratitude,

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