



Ascension

Ascension WI EAP

COVID-19 and Overcoming Survivor's Guilt

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As a healthcare professional you see many individuals and families in your profession and even in your personal lives struggling with not only health issues but also many other COVID related stressors. During this difficult time of witnessing so many people struggling, you may start to experience feelings of guilt.



Your job is still intact while many of your friends, neighbors, and/or co-workers may have been suddenly out of work. Your job, while stressful, does not require you to cope with potential exposure in the course of your work day. Your immediate family remains safe while members of your community are ill, and you are constantly bombarded with news reports about the rising death tolls all over the world.

You have been social distancing and may even have been quarantined. You may or may not be in a comfortable living space, with necessities like electricity, water, food, toilet paper, or medications. But you are aware of resources that are available to you. While things may be stressful, you realize that others may have less comfort, support or fewer resources than you do. Perhaps you know of someone who is ill or has lost a loved one to this virus and now you

are struggling with guilt that you and your loved ones remain healthy.

This is a different form of survivor's guilt than we typically hear about, however; it is real and needs to be addressed.

Here are some helpful suggestions for getting out from beneath that heavy feeling of guilt:

Don't "should" on yourself: Instead of telling yourself you "should" feel this way or "shouldn't" feel that way, instead recognize that your reaction is normal. Your nature is that of a caregiver and caregivers tend to be compassionate, empathetic people. It is only natural that you would struggle with witnessing others' pain and suffering. This does not mean that you do not have the right to be happy and to feel relief that you and your loved ones are healthy.



Combat unhealthy "should" messages with positive affirmations:

- I am a good person
- I deserve happiness
- I am blessed and grateful for my life
- I am in control of my feelings and responses

Try using the statements above, or create some of your own. Make your affirmations positive, unconditional, and present tense. Write them down and say them often!

Try writing your own affirmations:

1. _____

2. _____

Pay it forward: Support those around you or those in your community that you know are struggling. Small acts of kindness go a long way and make you feel good.



- Donate money, clothing, supplies, food, etc.
- Offer to help out with yard work or grocery shopping.
- Don't forget how much a good friendly greeting, smile, or hand wave can do.
- Donate paid time off hours to those who need to be home to care for loved ones.
- Support local businesses by ordering take out.
- Send out "thinking of you" cards.

These are the ways that I will show kindness this week:

1. _____

2. _____

Don't forget to take care of yourself: Give yourself time to accept your feelings and process them in healthy ways. Try some of these activities to help guide you:

- Talk about your feelings with those you trust.
- Make a gratitude journal.
- Take part in relaxing activities such as guided meditation or go on a nature walk.
- Eat nutritiously.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Grieve for those that have died.

One way I will care for myself today is:

One goal I have to pay it forward is:

I am grateful for these things:

1. _____

2. _____

To cope with survivor's guilt it is helpful to connect with others and practice healthy self-care. Over time, feelings of guilt diminish. If the feelings persist or are overwhelming, then it is important to seek additional help.



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If you think you might be experiencing survivor's guilt please contact your Employee Assistance Program today. Services are free and confidential.