

COVID-19 reflections from the perspective of a social worker who supports military families

Christy Parker, LCSW

In a few short months, as COVID-19 entered our lives, life as we know it, has shifted. With a stay at home order in place, many are not leaving their homes, many are teleworking, and children are not going to school. Playgrounds have closed and families are developing new ways to connect with and occupy their children.

In my search to understand the situation, I have encountered and been inspired by peoples responses to this crisis. Some, are grateful for the time away from the fast pace of their usual routine, some are enjoying time with their families, some have learned new skills, some have taught their children new skills, and some have a unique perspective based on their age and experience that leads them to understand that this will pass and things like this have happened before.

As a social worker, I have the opportunity to apply my work experiences and knowledge to this situation. One of the key things I keep coming back to is reminding myself to apply the principals of gratitude and really taking time to soothe myself and those around me. I do this by waking up each day and thinking what am I grateful for, by taking a moment to recognize what I can and can not do to change the situation. I can care about others, donate money to a cause, and connect with others using a variety of things either by phone, text, or live communication. I can balance my time so that I let go of things I can not change, spending only occasional time reading about what is happening in the world, and spending other time, finding ways to connect with nature, reading that book I could never find time to read, and reconnecting with family.

My job has also moved to telework and provided the opportunity for me to engage in additional trainings. I am using this opportunity to learn from others in my field. In doing this, it was brought to my attention, what we all need in times like this is a connection to others but also our own space to work through what is happening. I keep coming back to this idea of space, particularly when I think about the families I work with or even my own family. Finding space is challenging when living in tight quarters and when being together so frequently. It is easy to fall into conflict patterns in times of stress and easy to forget to take space or pause to remember how much we care about each other. It is hard to stay calm, in times of stress and this affects families. Families finding ways to stress less as a family is powerful. Taking the time to focus on gratitude's, taking needed space to prevent arguments, letting others take their needed space, listening to each other, playing games or engaging in playful activities, sharing meals, and focusing on what the family appreciates about each other, is powerful. Establishing and following a consistent routine helps young children who are accustomed to their school routine and families that creatively find this routine, are learning how to thrive in these challenging circumstances. Some useful resources, are continuously being posted to the MCCS Quantico facebook page and some that I particularly gravitate toward are the library resources available which includes resources for children and applications that provide free exercise classes. Additional information and resources can be found on the Family advocacy facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/QuanticoFAP> .