

Good afternoon. I'm Jeff Parmer and I serve as the chaplain for the City of Fitzgerald. I've been asked by the Emerging Infectious Disease Task Force to share with you a few reminders during these very unprecedented times. I think it's fair to say that no one saw this pandemic coming. One moment we were living our lives and the next moment everything we know changed. Schools and churches have closed, vacations have been cancelled, cities and towns are under curfews or "shelter-in-place" orders and life continues to evolve every day. Life has changed and we simply don't know for how long.

In times like this it is, when life has become so abnormal, we often experience feelings and emotions that are out-of-the ordinary. Let me say clearly: The ABNORMAL emotions and physical responses you may encounter are completely NORMAL." While in crisis, when we feel unsafe and life feels REALLY unfair, you may find yourself expressing different emotional or physical responses.

Emotional responses MAY include:

- Fear or anxiety
- Frustration or anger
- Withdrawal
- Being unmotivated or unfocused
- Having difficulty concentrating or remembering

Physical responses MAY include:

- Inability to sleep or sleeping too much
- Upset stomach
- No appetite or "stress eating" (eating too much)
- Having no energy or "buzzing" (can't stay still)

So how do we get through these times together? This is the time we need to practice good self-care.

What is self-care? Self-care can be defined this way: it's about choosing to take action for your own good every day. If you have flown on a commercial plane, you've heard this statement from a flight attendant, "In case of the loss of cabin pressure, put on your own oxygen mask first before assisting others." You have to take care of yourself and your emotional health first so you have the ability to help someone else; whether that someone else is a spouse, children, parents or co-workers. Below is a short list of self-care strategies you can use now or during any crisis.

- 1. Establish a "new normal" routine and stick to it.**
- 2. Get adequate sleep.**
- 3. Get some form of exercise each day. Being outside really does help.**
- 4. Eat right and drink plenty of water.**
- 5. Advocate for your needs, ask for help and allow others to help you.**
- 6. Find someone safe to talk with. We all need someone to whom we can scream, shout, cry and vent to.**
- 7. Give yourself a digital detox.**
- 8. Invest in another person. Find a way to help someone else.**
- 9. Spend a few moments each day writing out your emotions.**
- 10. Give and receive grace. We are all in this together and need to allow everyone the space to get through it.**

We are a strong and tight-knit community. We have all witnessed this community come together and support one another through difficult times before. And this one will be no different. While we do not know where or when the "other side" of this season is located, we know this, there is an "other side". And we know that those that get stronger are those that lean on each other, encourage each other, care, support and love through the frustration and suffering. We are that kind of community.

Chaplain Jeff Parmer