



ASCHP August circular letter

Between a rock and hard place

This year 2020 will most likely be remembered as one of the most trying times in recent history. No one can escape the misery of the lockdown and the ensuing social and economic crises. Just to put it in broader perspective, the Covid-19 pandemic is not unique for the world has seen many such plaques in the past. The black plaque that peaked in Europe during the 14th century resulted in the deaths of up to 200 million people. Another global tragedy was the Spanish flu of 1918 that infected 500 million people (about a third of the world's population at that time, of which the death toll is estimated between 17 and 50 million). To many these are perhaps just statistics, but not to us for my Husband's grandpa succumbed of the flu in 1924 and it had a very far reaching family ripple effect extending to later generations when the children were orphaned at a very young age.

True, talking about previous pandemics does not really console us for we are still sweat in the heat of the battle right now. Last night I found myself having to comfort our daughter who feels huge despair because she cannot attend her university classed or enjoy socials with her friends. It surely is an unnatural life for youth in their teens and nothing that you and I could say, seems to console them. Despite trying to adopt positive attitudes and clinging to threads of hope to ultimately overcome, we cannot be blind sighted to the sad reality that Corona threat is currently a miserable experience confronting all of us.

How do we reflect meaningfully on this and how do we encourage one another as counsellors to persevere? In the first instance we have to admit that we are not super human beings, but vulnerable just like many of our clients. Our strength is therefore not vested in our resistance and immunity, but in our empathy – we can feel with others in need, because we are able to feel for ourselves. When we counsel, we do not stand in an exalted place like many professionals are enticed to do; for biomedical healthcare proceeds from a vantage point of authority, clinical knowledge and coercion.

Rethinking counselling in the light of impending crises

The wellness approach to counselling is different for we are people among other people, not professionally above people; hence it is aligned to client centred counselling which means that the client is regarded as a co-counsellor and we as counsellors can also be mutually enriched by the process of rendering support. Yet as people among other people, we are aware of a calling which makes counselling a vocation (from the Latin 'vocare'). A calling is a strong inner impulse towards particular course of action and often accompanied by a conviction of a transcendent influence. The essential thing, however, in perceiving counselling as calling is that the calling itself names, and qualifies one for the task as being fit. Of course professionalism and training can contribute value to a vocation, but it cannot replace it for it makes us competent to perform *doing* therapies, but only a calling can be a foundation for *being therapies*. A calling is irrevocable and endows one with a sense of meaning and purpose; the real reward of a calling is not monetary gain, but the deep fulfilment of

being able to live out our respective callings. We are strong when we are weak, for in our fainting fits we discover resources that we did not know was there.

We conclude, therefore that, we should refrain from defining a counsellor solely in terms of academic training rather than in terms of who the counsellor is. It evokes the realization that unless my counselling services that I have to offer reflects my *profile as a counsellor*, I may not be adequately authentic. What is my self-identity as a counsellor? This is what we must constantly and reflexively account for. In comforting my children during lock down, I must admit that I often did not always know what to say to them. Yet, in the end I realized that my task primarily was not to utter clever arguments, speak words of sublime wisdom and even less to apply motivational techniques; my vantage point was simply to be fully and sincerely there for them, feel with them and in a way enter their suffering so that they would not be alone. This requires sincere mindfulness, a loving embrace, attentive and devoted listening and deep respect for their feelings in voicing their personal trials and tribulations without counteracting it. I was more than a counsellor, I am also a mother and fellow human being that was acquainted with pain and suffering, but did not succumb to it because of my sense of who I was in my deepest core, one with a vocation to be a mother to the motherless and a friend to the lonely and alienated.

Finding strength in networking

It is hard to remain strong when we are standing alone; we constantly need to engage in networking opportunities to create the space for encouraging one another. Planning a fraternal from time to time to provide a stage for interaction could be a good idea and something that we should encourage in the new year. In the meantime there are some very good support groups that one could join and I want to share a few links with you.

- The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) is an excellent and well prepared platform that offers an online toolkit for mental health. They can be reached at <http://sadag.org/>. They deal with depression, bipolar, suicide, ADHD and OCD, Trauma/PTSD, substance abuse, sleep disorders and schizophrenia, etc. You will find a wealth of information here.

For those of you who also practice physical wellness support, we have found the following websites trustworthy and helpful:

- Dr. Josh Axe at <https://draxe.com> or <https://www.facebook.com/DrJoshAxe> is an astute wellness practitioner that offers useful support for various conditions from a natural perspective. His advice provides access to affordable and effective remedies over a very wide spectrum and is very educational to learn more about various conditions.
- On more sophisticated level Dr Joseph Mercola , (<https://www.mercola.com>) American alternative practitioners offers valuable coaching based on sound research.

By this time, our members ought to know that we are not against the use of pharmaceuticals and medical intervention when required, but that we as wellness practitioners work on primary health care level to support people in following healthy lifestyles conducive to total wellbeing. As part of a holistic strategy we cover mental, emotional, social, spiritual and physical wellness as integrative human system.

We leave you with two significant quotes:

- *America's health care system is in crisis precisely because we systematically neglect wellness and prevention.* - Tom Harkin. This is also true of South Africa.
- *The single overriding objective in wellness is creating constant personal renewal where we recognize and act on the truth that each day is a miraculous gift, and our job is to untie the ribbons. That's the Law of Esprit: living life with joy.* - Greg Anderson

News flashes

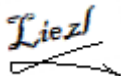
The ASCHP office has submitted the 5 year cycle audit documentation to SAQA for renewal in July and we trust that it will go well as SAQA will, due to Covid, conduct a virtual audit this time. The criteria involves inter alia the following focus areas:

- Further development and extension of scope of practice within the wellness domain, especially with regards to NQF level descriptors and options for members for vertical migration of the designation structure
- The facilitation of accredited training opportunities in collaboration with suitable training providers with reference to learning pathways to higher NQF levels
- An affordable CPD system that can satisfactorily deal with non-compliance issues
- Streamlining of the disciplinary procedure in terms of a professional code for wellness practitioners. This will in the future provide for proforma documentation being available to the public and members.

We have also recently embarked on a new CPD system on the Video by TechnoDezi Pty (Ltd) platform that will offer easy-to-do audio-visual CPD training at low costs. Please see our first link <https://www.videolearn.co.za/home/iewCourse/5e005091-13e2-4861-9398-c1d242e01772>. More will follow and we will inform you via email.

Thank you for your kind attention

Wishing you and yours to remain well



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