

## Seeking Strength in Times of Crisis

### Fast Facts

#### Date

April 27, 2021, 4–5 pm CT

#### Featuring

- **Opener: Dr. Cheryl Maurana**, MCW
- **Rev. Krista Gregory**, Dell Children's Medical Center
- **Dr. Daniela Lamas**, Brigham and Women's Hospital
- **Dr. John Tarpley**, University of Botswana
- **Moderator: Dr. Chris Stawski**, Kern Family Foundation

#### Event Materials

- [Recording](#) >
- [Slides](#) >
- [Word clouds of takeaways](#) >

#### Event Reach

- 71 real-time attendees
- 16 states represented
- Attendees from U.S., U.K., and Japan



Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed personal and professional challenges for everyone, but especially for those in the healthcare field. During this time, many of us have wondered: To what extent is flourishing possible and equitable in trying times? And what resources, support and actions can help move us toward strength and resilience?

On Tuesday, April 27, 2021, KNN colleagues and individuals from beyond the founding member schools convened to explore how pathways to flourishing can help health professions learners, practitioners and organizations find strength and resilience during crisis. Three exceptional speakers shared perspectives and experiences from pastoral care, critical care and global health work.

Dr. Daniela Lamas led off the presentations with stories that encapsulated the healthcare environment at various stages of the pandemic. Dr. Lamas recounted small moments and details—the patient on the eve of the hospital's no-visitor policy who worried about how her husband would bring her sneakers for physical therapy; after Thanksgiving, the chronic lung disease patient in decline who could not be helped clinically, but could be given compassion and his choice of food and drink. These recollections set the stage by illuminating ways in which healthcare practitioners navigated uncertainty to help patients amid unprecedented situations.

Drawing on his life experiences, Dr. Tarpley spoke on four themes related to resilience: religion, framing and grit, joy and relationships. He reflected that the root of the word religion—re + ligio—has medical cognates in “ligature” and “ligament” and poses an opportunity to consider, “What binds you and holds you together?”. To explore framing, grit and joy, Dr. Tarpley related

lessons from “The Book of Joy” and stories shared by the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Exiled from his home country, the Dalai Lama could be bitter, but reframes his situation by remembering that all he can control is his own thoughts and actions. Tutu has experience numerous adverse situations including medical issues like polio, tuberculosis and metastatic cancer, but “exudes joy” despite these circumstances, in part because he reframes negatives as challenges to overcome. Finally, Dr. Tarpley emphasized the importance of relationships,



*Pictured clockwise from top left: Rev. Gregory and Drs. Lamas, Tarpley and Stawski.*

referencing a study on happiness and longevity that found strong, satisfying relationships impacted and predicted longevity more than factors such as genetics, cholesterol levels and other clinical values. A firm believer in the maxim, "You are what you read," Dr. Tarpley shared resources that have informed his thinking in a [list of references and prayer for pandemic times](#).

Last, based on her work leading the Center for Resiliency at Dell Children's Medical Center, Rev. Krista Gregory ended on a practical note, sharing an exercise for cultivating compassion and equanimity. She invited the audience to participate in the following exercise geared toward caregivers:

### **Mindful Self-Compassion Practice Developed by Kristin Neff and Chris Germer**

**Follow along with Rev. Krista Gregory at [34:38](#) in the session recording**

- Get comfortable in your seat, and take a few deep breaths to ground yourself.
- Bring to mind someone from your personal or professional life who is in pain, struggling or may be frustrating you. Imagine the situation they are in, and notice any tension you may be feeling in your body.
- Listen to the following words:

*Everyone is on their own life journey.  
I am not the cause of this person's suffering;  
nor is it entirely within my power to make it go away, even if I wish I could.  
Moments like this are difficult to bear,  
yet I still may try to help if I can.*

- Focus on breathing, imagining that you're filling your whole body with compassion. As you exhale, blow compassion in the direction of the person having a hard time.
- Breathe *in* compassion for yourself and breathe *out* compassion for the other person. You might think to yourself, "One for me, one for you. In for me, out for you."
- If it's difficult to give compassion, focus on fostering compassion for yourself, and fill your cup before extending compassion to others.
- Focus on any tension in your body and send compassion to those areas. Imagine that you're floating on waves of compassion. The ocean of compassion is limitless and can hold all suffering, even your own.
- Return to the words again.

Between each presentation, participants reflected on their key learnings and takeaways by using Poll Everywhere to create a group word cloud of phrases and concepts that resonated with them.

The presentations were followed by a moderated Q&A session and optional breakout rooms in which attendees could raise additional questions or comments with each individual speaker.

As a closing thought, Dr. Maurana shared a quote often attributed to Confucius: "Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."

We sincerely hope the strategies and reflections shared in this event help healthcare learners and professionals find strength and resilience during challenging times. ■



Click image to access full versions of all three of the word clouds on the KNN's website.