



2020

REFLECTIONS

Chapter 34 - Your Proverbial Oxygen Mask

Do you remember when we used to fly those things called "airplanes" in the time before COVID-19?

You know, those fixed-wing, aerodyne aircrafts, where people would sit less than six feet from each other for hours on end, so they could visit faraway friends and family in person? Before takeoff, the crew would always tell parents: "If anything happens in flight, put your own oxygen mask on first."

That guidance has always resonated with me as an elegant example of self-care. At its essence, it is the "[Same Boat, Different Decks](#)" concept we explored in a previous chapter. Anytime we uplift others, we achieve greater heights ourselves. Conversely, when we take care of ourselves, we are better equipped to help others. Same boat. One shared, collective fate.

Today's reflection speaks to the importance of self-care and wearing your proverbial oxygen mask, particularly during this time. It comes from Maria Chua, Coordinator, SHHS; and Dr. Judy Chiasson, Coordinator, Human Relations, Diversity & Equity Department. Thank you, Maria and Judy.

UNTITLED

It was called the safer-at-home order. Stay home. Keep a physical distance of six feet. Wear a face covering. Wash your hands frequently. Wear personal protective equipment (PPE).

The sad reality is that not every health care provider or essential worker has the PPE they need, nor is everyone able to stay home. Across the country, persons of color and people living in poverty have elevated rates of contracting and dying from COVID-19. Poverty is both the cause and the consequence of poor health. In addition to living in crowded conditions, many have jobs that require them to leave home and interact with the public. Furthermore, home isn't always safe. Reports of child abuse and partner violence have plummeted, though it's likely that the rates have actually increased.

Our communities are suffering. When the pandemic struck, SHHS staff stepped up. Our SHHS hotline and the food distribution programs reach over 700,000 Angelenos each day. We continue to give to those who are suffering and grieving, even though many of us and our loved ones are also suffering and grieving.

Judy and I have been reflecting on our own personal protective equipment, both literally and figuratively. Professional self-care was a topic discussed at every staff meeting I led when I was a Local District administrator and one that Judy discusses often with her staff. We encourage all administrators to do the same and advocate for discussion of that level of PPE in all our meetings as well as for ourselves. We are the ones to model appropriate limits. We all must don our protective gear to do this work. Self-care is an essential personal protective equipment. Be unapologetic - put on your proverbial oxygen mask first.

Last month, SHHS staff participated in virtual meetings with Dr. David Schonfeld, director of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement. He spoke about supporting students and ourselves during the pandemic. Some of the key takeaways that resonated for us are:

- Be aware of and have sufficient support to deal with personal impact of work

- Reach out to colleagues/resources in school district and community when more is critically needed
- Celebrate positive contributions you make
- Set reasonable expectations

May we each stay safe and take good care.

Sincerely,

Pia, Maria, and Judy

*Liked this Reflection? Tell the Author, Spread a Smile
[Go Here](#), Sign In (very bottom of page), and Post a Comment*