

## CONVERSATION GUIDE

# Sustaining Connection *for Well-Being*

### ABOUT THIS CONVERSATION GUIDE

Our teams are stretched beyond their capacity addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, and as leaders, we seek to be supportive and compassionate. We are also community builders. Inviting conversation about what shapes well-being at this time is especially meaningful. The conversation alone creates community through connection.

This guide is intended to provide a flexible framework for facilitators. As members of the Catholic Health Association (CHA) Well-Being Task Force, we hope to widen the conversations about well-being by including more voices. In turn, we hope to generate a richer and more in-depth understanding of well-being consistent with the times and congruent with our Catholic heritage.

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*Developed with significant input from brave communities who shared their thoughts on the questions found in this guide.*

## SAMPLE INVITATION

Dear Colleagues,

I want to invite you to join me for a virtual discussion about how we foster individual and community well-being in the face of changing times. I have been inspired to bring us together based on recent conversations and experiences I've had with peers on well-being. The questions we've reflected on about well-being are at the heart of our health care ministry. This will be a virtual conversation open to all. Click [\[here\]](#) to RSVP, and you will be sent in advance a couple of questions for reflection.

Date:

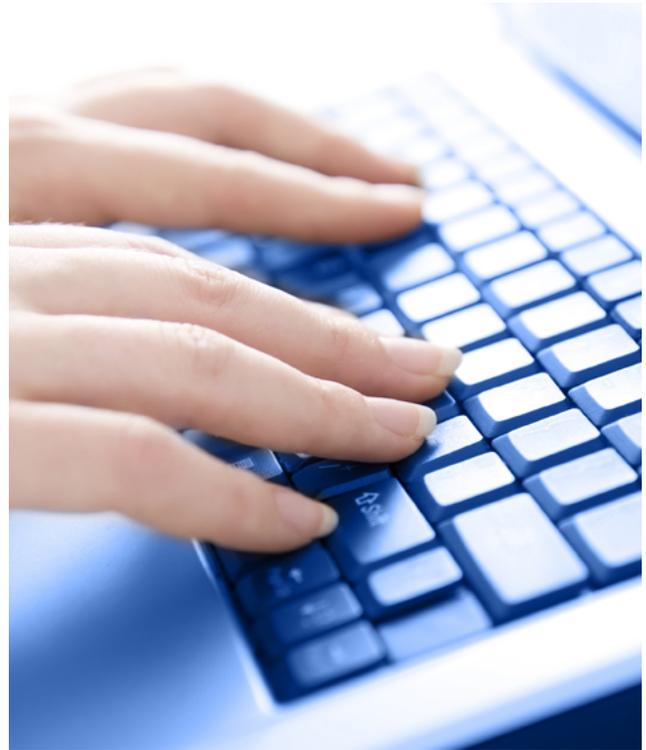
Time:

Virtual Link:

In advance, please consider these reflection questions:

- + What sustains your well-being?
- + What are the critical elements of well-being for which we need to be especially in tune?

Sincerely, [Your name here]



## BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING CONNECTION IN VIRTUAL SPACE

- + *All cameras on:* encourage all to join by video.
- + *Stay in Gallery View* as much as possible to create community.
- + *Set a tone of togetherness* through reflection, pause and listening.
- + *Pair up to share* facilitation role with one person monitoring the chat window.
- + *Encourage sharing via chat* while asking people to limit private chats to stay present with the larger group.
- + *Hiding self-view* can encourage better engagement and focus on the conversation.
- + *Consider breakout rooms* for larger groups to allow for a more in-depth conversation.



## FACILITATOR GUIDE

Time	Facilitation Notes	Other Tips
15 min	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p><b>Reflection</b> (see appendix for sample reflections)</p> <p><b>Share purpose</b></p> <p><b>Introductions</b> with check-in (consider using chat to check in with larger groups)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ What brought you to this conversation?</li> <li>+ How are you feeling (brief personal updates)?</li> </ul>	<p>As a general practice, personal updates should be brief and focus on any changes (big or small) and important decisions or realizations in your life.</p>
35 min	<p><b>Facilitate dialogue</b></p> <p>Our dialogue today focuses on well-being and what shapes well-being in our current times. As we are made individually, in God's image and for community with others, we will consider both our personal and communal well-being. Healthy groups support and are made up of healthy individuals. This is a time for close self examination as we grapple with the new realities of our day-to-day lives and our call to the Catholic health ministry.</p> <p><b>Question prompts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <i>What sustains your well-being?</i></li> <li>+ <i>What are essential elements of collective well-being that we need to nurture and build?</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Summarize key insights and themes that emerged</b></p>	<p>Ideally, all will have an opportunity to share their thoughts in response to the question prompts.</p> <p>Encourage participants to share the speaking time, be present and open and practice active listening.</p> <p>Connect the second question to human flourishing and that we are created to be in community.</p>
10 min	<p><b>Action and Wrap-up</b></p> <p>We recommend closing the conversation by asking, <i>"What is one concrete thing I or we can do toward fostering greater well-being for ourselves and our ministries?"</i></p> <p>Encourage all to reflect on this for 2 minutes and then post to the chat window.</p> <p>If any actions were named, reinforce the next steps.</p> <p>Thank people for their time.</p>	<p>A dialogue will often organically produce a commitment to new action. Don't force this, but if it emerges, encourage the path forward.</p>

### Additional Prompts

- + How am I feeling? What feelings have I had today?
- + What is a challenge I've had recently? How can I re-frame it as an opportunity? What are the benefits of this situation? How can I help make it better?
- + When did I feel creative or happy today?
- + What's a moment that mattered today that brought me joy, centered or stabilized me? What did I do to make those good things happen? How can I savor those good feelings?

## SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES

### OPENING REFLECTION OPTION 1

As you inhale, fully arrive in this moment for our conversation.

With your next exhale, breathe out your anxieties and frustrations.

Allow yourself to be present here.

To be present.

To be.

Placing yourself entirely in the loving presence of God and one another, continue with deep grounding breaths as I pray.

God, if I am challenged today,  
if there is anything difficult or painful I must face,  
help me to let go of anxiety about the outcome,  
And to be mindful of your presence with me.

No matter where I am, what my circumstances,  
what my past has held, or what I need to do,  
in every struggle, every birth, and death, great or small,  
In this moment you are here, in loving presence.

Your life flows in me, and through me.  
Your breathing fills me, and awakens me.  
Your blessing surrounds me; your delight sustains me.  
Your will creates me. Your light guides me.

Let this be my path: to be with you,  
and to choose my way by Your light.  
Help me to let go of anxiety about the outcome,  
and to be mindful of your presence with me.\*

Amen.

*\* A prayer by Chuck Hawley, a long-term care leader from Providence Health & Services who wrote and shared this in his last days of battling cancer.*

### OPENING REFLECTION OPTION 2

“The Lord stood by me and strengthened me so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed.” 2 Timothy 4:17

Gracious God,

We give you thanks for your call to extend the healing ministry of Catholic health care. At this difficult time, provide us with strength and courage to be your loving hands to all who come to us for care. Use us now as your vessel to bring hope to those who need it most. Through us, pour out this hope abundantly as a reminder to those who are scared that you are always at our side. Strengthen this ministry and our employees to embrace the challenges that come our way. May we never lose confidence in your love for us. As we walk through this dark hour, we believe your light shines before us all, and with it, the promise of a new tomorrow.

In your Holy Name, we pray.

Amen.

### ARTICLES

Consider sharing in advance or attaching one or two of the following articles or images. These are offered purely as a way to invite people to reflect further on the questions presented.

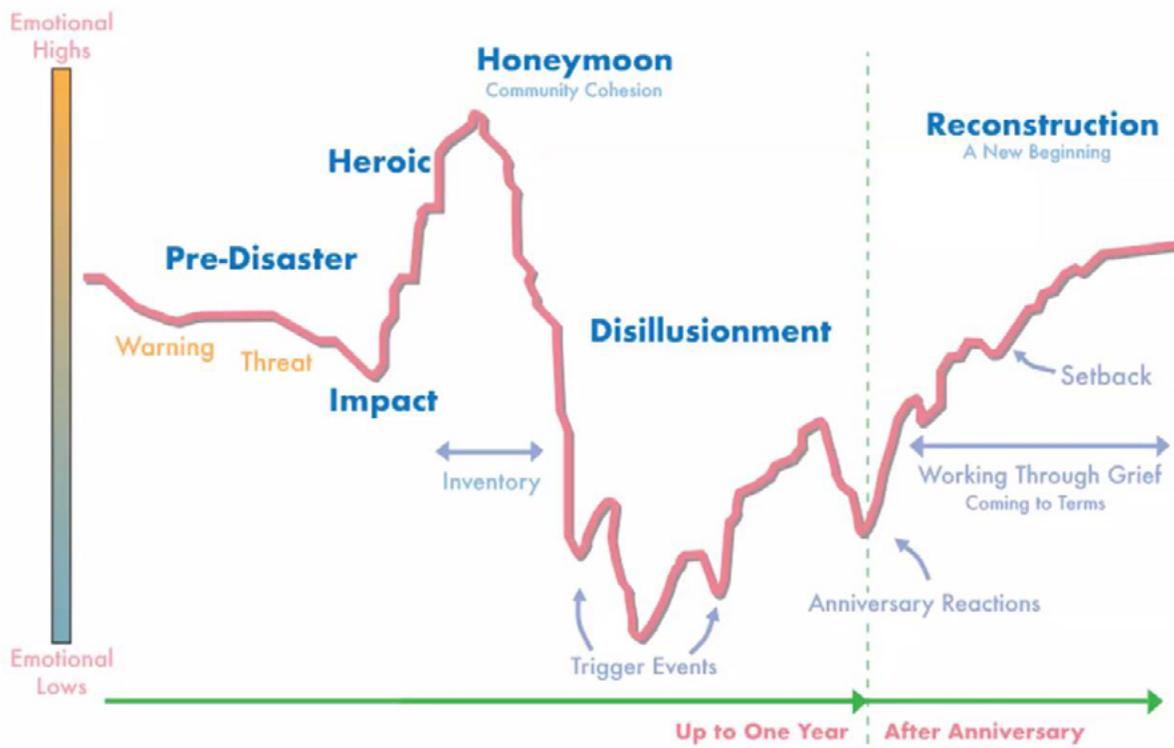
- + “That Discomfort You’re Feeling Is Grief”  
<https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief>
- + “Coping with Uncertainty During COVID-19”  
<https://www.gottman.com/blog/coping-with-uncertainty-during-covid-19-an-international-gottman-trainer-shares-their-perspective/>



## DIAGRAMS

### PHASES OF A DISASTER

While disasters and other collective traumas are unpredictable, researchers have mapped the emotional responses to them based on patterns witnessed in various times of crisis, from earthquakes to terrorism to disease and social unrest. Knowing where we are in the phases can help with self-compassion and well-being. The chart is from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

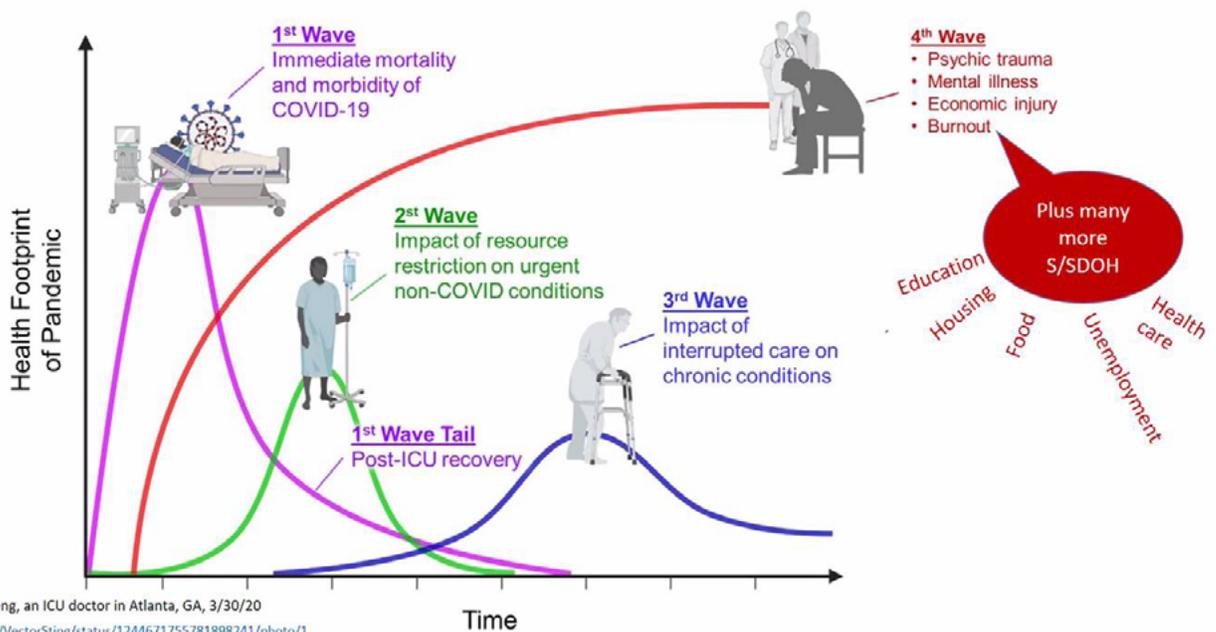


## DIAGRAMS

### PANDEMIC'S FOURTH WAVE

The physical strain and loss of the COVID-19 pandemic have been enormous. Experts are just as concerned about the long-term mental health impact on people and the consequences for health systems as a result of the ongoing stress and trauma. The graphic below from Dr. Victor Tseng highlights the lasting mental health implications.

The Pandemic's Fourth Wave: What comes after?



# TAKE A MOMENT *for* YOURSELF *to*

**Pause. Breathe. Heal.**

**Be still.**

For just this moment, bring your attention to your breath.

Inhale deeply and settle yourself into your body.

Exhale the stress and tension you feel.

On your next inhale, pray, *BE STILL*

And as you exhale, *AND KNOW THAT YOU ARE GOD*

**BE STILL**

**AND KNOW THAT YOU ARE GOD**

Keep breathing this prayer for a few moments.

(Repeat the prayer several times)

As you conclude, please remember: Even now, God is with you,  
as near to you as your breath. Continue giving yourself  
the gift to pause, breathe and heal knowing you are not alone.

**He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted  
among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”**

*Psalm 46:10*



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