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Subject: Campus Update March 27

Dear LSC Campus Community:

Today during my usual early morning scan of higher educational online journals and other media, I came across Scott Berinato's article in the Harvard Business Review <https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief>. The article discusses Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's stages of grief and insight from her co-author David Kessler. I urge each of you to read that short article carefully as it speaks directly to the higher education community and our various reactions to the grief we are feeling for our students, ourselves, our loved ones...and our previous work life.

Recall the five stages of grief are Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. In answer to a question on how to manage the grief caused by the COVID-19 crisis, Kessler states:

*"Understanding the stages of grief is a start. But whenever I talk about the stages of grief, I have to remind people that the stages aren't linear and may not happen in this order. It's not a map but it provides some scaffolding for this unknown world. There's denial, which we [saw] a lot of early on: *This virus won't affect us*. There's anger: *You're making me stay home and taking away my activities*. There's bargaining: *Okay, if I social distance for two weeks everything will be better, right?* There's sadness: *I don't know when this will end*. And finally there's acceptance. *This is happening; I have to figure out how to proceed.*"*

"Acceptance, as you might imagine, is where the power lies. We find control in acceptance. I can wash my hands. I can keep a safe distance. I can learn how to work virtually."

The emotional work of finding control and finding acceptance in these challenging times sparked another memory for me. During my time as a Fulbright Scholar in Iceland, I encountered a most amazing resiliency among my friends there and among the Icelandic citizenry in general. I heard the phrase "þetta reddast (pronounced [thet-ta red-ust](#))" whenever people were dealing with a difficult or challenging situation. In a recent article at <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20180603-the-unexpected-philosophy-icelanders-live-by>, Katie Hammel provides a loose interpretation of this phrase: "It means 'it'll all work out in the end' – and if Iceland had an official slogan, this would be it."

When you live on an island of fire and ice, you can bet there are plenty of struggles to overcome. Icelanders know things will work out as they will and not as they may wish. They stay with reality and what they can control. They avoid needless suffering and

anxiety by reminding each other “petta reddast.” I witnessed this many times when I lived there. Things worked out. petta reddast.

And all of our struggles **will** work out in the end! We will get through this stressful and confusing time. Realize that how well Lake Superior College thrives during and after this crisis **depends on you**. What we collectively do now impacts our collective future and the health and wellness of the college, since no one area or division by itself ensures success. It takes all of us doing our work in whatever ways we can within the guidelines for our own health and safety and for the health and safety and success of our students. If an area falls down, we are all likely to fall. This does not have to happen.

I hear you out there: “yeah, but...what if...” Right. The unknown, the worst-case scenario, the scary future...all of that can be categorized as anticipatory grief. This kind of grief is what causes the needless suffering and anxiety over things that have not happened.

Kessler says:

“Anticipatory grief is that feeling we get about what the future holds when we’re uncertain. ... Anticipatory grief is also more broadly imagined futures. There is a storm coming. There’s something bad out there. With a virus, this kind of grief is so confusing for people. Our primitive mind knows something bad is happening, but you can’t see it. This breaks our sense of safety. We’re feeling that loss of safety. I don’t think we’ve collectively lost our sense of general safety like this. Individually or as smaller groups, people have felt this. But all together, this is new. We are grieving on a micro and a macro level.”

What to do? Find your balance. Stay in the present tense. Re-read my update from March 20th. Know yourself and be a warrior leader. Those of us who have moved into Acceptance of this situation are not more highly evolved or somehow “better.” We have just moved into that space that allows us to say “petta reddast” (some with a better Icelandic accent than others) and move on with our work.

Judging others on their level of grief is not helpful. Rising to an Acceptance level also does not mean sitting around with our legs crossed on a meditation pillow. Acceptance is also action, which is exactly what we have been doing here at LSC: **We have a plan, we are working the plan, and we will adjust the plan as the situation changes. Period.** Leave out the things that have not happened and the things you cannot control. Focus on your work and our collective success.

Kessler said it this way: “...think about how to **let go of what you can’t control**. What your neighbor is doing is out of your control. What is in your control is staying six feet away from them and washing your hands. Focus on that.”

Visit <https://www.lsc.edu/coronavirus/>often. PLEASE direct your questions at info@lsc.edu Send your ideas and suggestions to info@lsc.edu Encourage others to send their ideas, suggestions, worrisome rumors, and questions to info@lsc.edu.

We are ready for Monday, and Tuesday, and...beyond. We have this, folks!

Have a lovely weekend.

Patricia L. Rogers, Ph.D.
President
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