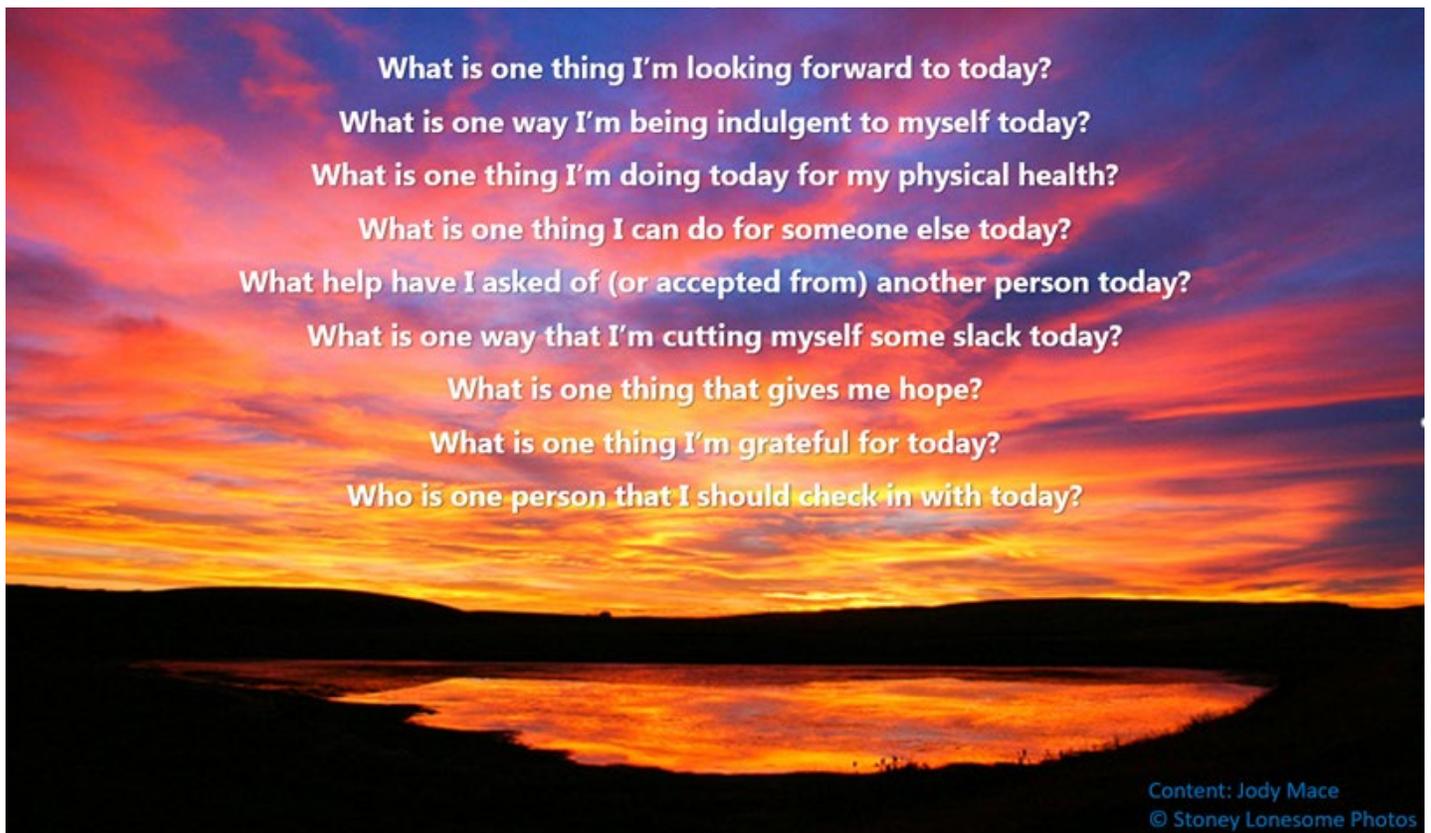




As UF Health, Alachua County, the State of Florida, and the rest of our country begin taking steps to reopen/resume/revert back toward the way things were “before,” it is important to take time to reflect on your feelings about adjusting to the newest policies, guidelines, and expectations. For some, the news of reopening is a welcome relief, for others it brings added concerns or even dread. Most will have mixed feelings, which can result in uneven emotional reactions, anxiety, difficulty sleeping, or other signs of distress. Talking through these feelings with your support network may be more challenging during the pandemic due to isolation, difficulty juggling multiple obligations, feelings of awkwardness/discomfort, or other barriers. However, one valuable tool that can be used very effectively is journaling. While for some this may evoke visions of pre-teen girls with heart-shaped, pad-locked diaries, the reality is that **there is a strong scientific evidence base documenting the health benefits of journaling**. You can read more about it (as well as tips for getting started) in this article: <https://positivepsychology.com/benefits-of-journaling/>

There are many different types of journaling, so you may want to try different options to find the one that is right for you. To get started, you might **keep track of 3-5 things you are grateful for each day**. You can do this on paper or using an app such as the Gratitude app: <https://gratefulness.me/> or the Grateful app: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/grateful-a-gratitude-journal/id1197512462>
To read more about the mental health benefits of daily gratitude logs for healthcare workers, click here: <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/9/3/e022695>

You may prefer to **complete a daily check-in, by responding to a quick set of questions each day**. Here’s an example shared by Jennifer Dungan, PhD, MSN, BSN from the UF College of Nursing:



Alternatively, you can **consider keeping a “COVID-19 Journal” to process your experiences and document the impact of this historical event on your life.** Doing so may help you consider the pros and cons of this experience, including any lessons you have learned that might impact how you want to structure your time and energy as the world begins to resume a more “normal” (to get started, try responding to the prompts below):

- *How has this experience impacted your daily life?*
- *How has it affected your view of the important work you do?*
- *If applicable, how has spending more time at home with family influenced your interactions and feelings toward your family? OR How has spending time isolated at home influenced your interactions and feelings toward your family and friends?*
- *What has happened during this crisis that has surprised you in a positive way? What has happened during this crisis that has surprised you in a negative way?*
- *What parts of your “old life” do you miss and look forward to experiencing again?*
- *What parts of your “old life” do you not miss (or dread returning to)? Must you re-introduce those aspects of your life, or is there a way to let go of these stressors when things “get back to normal”?*
- *What can you be grateful for in this moment?*
- *How might this experience impact your life long-term?*

You may wish to **encourage children to keep a journal of their own experiences**, or help them to complete this [Printable COVID-19 Time Capsule Journal](#) as a memento of this bizarre time.

Finally, many people choose to **write about daily experiences, challenges, and emotions**. Having this outlet can help you to organize your thoughts and decrease your experience of stress and anxiety. Rather than keeping things “bottled up,” you can release the intrusive thoughts onto the page and often gain some perspective in the process. You do not have to set aside time to journal every day, though many people experience benefit in doing so.

If you find that writing is comfortable/enjoyable/soothing to you, **you may even wish to develop a journal entry into an essay that could be published in a scholarly journal**. Many academic outlets include such contributions (e.g., “A Piece of My Mind” series in *JAMA*), and there are online sites that also cater to these submissions (e.g, KevinMD.com). See below for a call for submissions from medical trainees who are interested in sharing their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- ***Academic Medicine* calls for letters to the editor from trainees about coronavirus experiences**

Academic Medicine, a peer-reviewed journal of the AAMC, is seeking original submissions for letters to the editor from medical students, residents, and fellows on the topic of courage, connection, and COVID-19. Editors are seeking letters about how the crisis is contributing to positive transformation in health care and health professions education. The deadline for submissions is June 1.

[Read More](#)

Stay well,

Lisa J. Merlo, Ph.D., M.P.E.
(Legal Name = Lisa Merlo Greene)
Director of Wellness Programs, UF College of Medicine
Director of Research, Professionals Resource Network
Associate Professor of Psychiatry
University of Florida
Box 100256
Gainesville, FL 32611
352-294-4932
lmerlo@ufl.edu