WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE

Is Your Mental Health Only Yours?

Parenting in the Time of a Pandemic

Talk about Breonna Taylor

Norman Campus

Tulsa Campus

Memories of a Senior

Events & Training Calendar

DIVISION OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION | UNITED WE STAND
FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM/TWITTER: @DIVERSITYOU | PHONE: (405) 325 7314 | EMAIL: DIVERSITY.INCLUSION@OU.EDU
Realizing how vulnerable we are to COVID-19 has increased uncertainty, anxiety and even fear not only for our physical health, but also for our mental health. Addressing those concerns holistically at the community, relational and personal level is the strategy indicated by Isaac Prilleltensky, Ph.D., a community psychologist specialized in organizational change for community well-being.

Although everyone is potentially affected by the pandemic, for some the risk is higher. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention describes the toll that COVID-19 is taking on racial and ethnic minority groups as “a disproportionate burden of illness and death.” Both the rate at which Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino persons are hospitalized or die is consistently higher than the rate for white and Asian persons.

Those communities are more vulnerable to COVID-19 due to social, economical and environmental conditions, as pointed out by Brian Smedley, Ph.D., a psychologist at the American Association of Psychology. At the social level, Black/African American and Hispanic persons are more likely to experience barriers to access health care because of distrust or because they are not equipped with a health insurance. Yet, they may be at a higher risk of chronic diseases, as reported by CDC.

At the environmental level, living in a densely populated area may prevent a person from practicing social distancing. And that is often the case for marginalized communities, according to CDC. Finally, the same source reports that Hispanic and Black/African American workers "often in critical positions" may be at a higher risk of infection with no access to sick leave.

As social, economic and environmental factors coalesce, those communities become more vulnerable and experience high levels of uncertainty. Scott Miller, Ph.D., director of the OU Counseling Center, explained in a recent webinar that uncertainty about one’s future may increase feelings of sadness, stress and fear, ground for mental health conditions.

For Smedley, ignoring community’s inequalities has repercussions on the population at large. Addressing them to restore well-being involves strategies that integrate the community, relational and individual level, for Prilleltensky.

How does that look like? On one side, communities are designed to proactively care for the members’ well-being; on the other, people feel empowered and capable of making decisions in and about their community through dialogue. In this reciprocal and supportive relationship, a person’s well-being is not just theirs. It is ours.
At this point, most of us have been home for two months either alone or with our families. At the onset of the pandemic, my partner and I welcomed the change of pace. But once week three hit, we were getting cabin fever. So we became intentional about the use of our time to create a routine and have some fun.

First, we decided to take turns with our children: my partner would work early in the day and be with the in the afternoon. I would manage the morning and the meal plan. After the first week of cooking eggs and bacon every morning, I couldn’t sustain it. Nor did I want to.

After breakfast and some exercise, our 4- and 14-month-old children would have a lesson: reading, drawing, or watch Circle Time with Ms. Monica, their teacher. I also started brain and movement breaks to include a dance party, sing-along or bubble blowing. To ensure that my partner and I could get work done, I also created a couple of activities that the children could do unattended. Only if all else failed, the children would join us on our work calls.

But even with a structure in place, it has been a challenge. Some days, the pull from my children and from work leaves me feeling overwhelmed and wandering how long we can reasonably sustain this situation.

So, if you are struggling or can't seem to find balance, focus on the process rather than on the outcome. To that end, I want to offer some tips that help me refine my processes.

- Create a schedule. Whether simple or complex, a schedule will give you boundaries.
- Take 15 minutes a day for yourself to read, to walk, or to do anything else enjoyable. It might not be a lot, but it is mighty. Self-care isn’t selfish.
- Eat fruits and vegetables as a snack. Although this is easier said than done, you know that fruits are “good for you,” just like exercising.
- Ask for help! Perhaps you can request to work on a different schedule. As a member of a community, do not feel like you are in this alone.
- Give yourself grace. After all, we are experiencing a pandemic, an event that is in no way "normal". So, it is OK if all three meals are pizza for one day. I’m sure your children will love it.
- Breathe and remember that achieving balance is a myth. Each day will be different; therefore, we need to start the search for equilibrium anew.
In a video published in his Facebook account, the mayor of Louisville, Greg Fisher, announced that all no-knock warrants will now require approval from the chief of police or his designee before going to a judge for final signoff. This, he said, will provide a higher level of scrutiny to a case.

Fischer also added that the body camera policy will be updated to require all sworn officers to wear cameras when serving warrants or in any situation in which they will identify themselves as police officers.

The changes address two major areas of concern relating to Taylor's death: that the police were acting on a no-knock warrant, and that the officers involved were not wearing cameras.
With the coronavirus pandemic, the long-standing recruiting strategies at OU went up in the air. But rather than giving in to discouragement, OU recruiters found new ways to engage prospect students. So, at OU the pandemic has become a trigger to collaborative change between the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, the Tribal Education departments across Oklahoma and the Department of Enrichment Programs. The result of that collaboration was the American Indian Admission Forum, hosted to recruit American Indian prospect students.

On April 30, students joined a Zoom room to meet OU American Indian faculty and staff and to ask questions about their educational experience as well as degree and financial options. As one of the first initiatives of this kind, the virtual recruiting session was a success with over 30 participants. Continuing to build relationships and collaborations at OU and across the state is one of the goals of the OU tribal liaison. But all the ways of doing it are yet to be invented.
How do you keep people connected in a pandemic? The OU-Tulsa Office of Student Affairs has the recipe: C3-Cousins Cooking Competition. Every Monday since May 4, international students, paired with American students, faculty and staff, get together to share their culture, knowledge and experiences by cooking a signature dish from their cuisine. Participants are judged on their presentation and the appearance of their dish.

Thus far, each session averaged 10 participants, encouraging the OU-Tulsa Student Affairs Office to invest in more virtual programming opportunities to build and strengthen relationships.
In 2019, Hennessey Chism joined the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as a program assistant. As an Arabic major with a keen interest in immigration law, Chism found many opportunities at OU to cultivate her interest in diversity and inclusion. Her ability to engage in conversation about stereotyping or cultural differences served her well when she became a member of the Undergraduate Student Congress, where she co-authored the Black History Month and the Black Emergency Response Team Support Resolution bills. At the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion she infused her professional and human talents in the many projects and programs to which she contributed.

The unexpected circumstances of the pandemic at the time of her graduation became a stimulus for Chism to share once more one of her many talents: short novel writing.

In the next pages, she takes the reader into her experience as a senior student graduating on the verge of the pandemic.

I didn't think this would be a big deal. Just days before spring break, I was cracking jokes in the office about the three-week-long spring break that OU administrators were going to announce any day now. I was excited for the much-needed break. I was exhausted. Between working for the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; serving the Student Government Association; participating in Mock Trial; and becoming certified to teach in Missouri, I was a tired senior. At the beginning of the spring semester, I fell a bit behind in classes. Being a senior is hard. Seniors carry so much responsibility for what they will do for the rest of their lives, and that weight bears down on us hard, sometimes.

I wasn't worried, though. I had a great support system. My college is small, so a lot of faculty and staff are like family to me. My bosses are role models who personally check in with their students to make sure we're doing OK.

Continued on next page.
The structure in my schedule and in my life helped me make it through college. Though I was tired, I never felt alone, and I always felt capable. Like so many of my classmates, I was excited for the rest and rejuvenation that the three-week break would bring. Despite the fact that it was never supposed to be a three-week break but rather one week of spring break and two weeks of online instruction, it felt the same as a three-week break for most of us.

In the days before March 13th, the air on campus was buzzing with excitement and uncertainty. I was no exception. In my exhaustion, ready for a break from late-night Google searches to find answers to questions about postgrad life, I was like anyone. I was like everyone.

Most of us left before March 13th. We never really go to class the day before a break, anyway. And our professors know that. What happened next was unknown for everyone. We didn’t know when we left a few days early for spring break that we wouldn’t be coming back. We didn’t know that the last time we walked on the south oval was going to be our last one. We didn’t know that the vanilla latte we bought at 1 a.m. at the Bookmark the night before a midterm exam would be the last one. We didn’t know that the last time we were at an OU event and some random student of music was dragged on stage to sing the OU chant, some of us probably giggled at the tradition. Some sang loudly with pride, while others rolled their eyes. But none of us knew that it would be our last time ever.

Then I received the email. And I cried. Not the one about two extra weeks of break – the other one. The one that said we wouldn’t be returning from our two weeks of break due to COVID-19. Suddenly I saw my Mock Trial team when, on Tuesday night at O’Connell’s on campus corner, it was frantically hitting down answers on a piece of paper before running them to the host of Trivia night. I saw the Chair of Congress banging her gavel to quiet down the attendees of the meeting before beginning.

Suddenly I saw my Mock Trial team when, on Tuesday night at O’Connell’s on Campus Corner, it was frantically hitting down answers on a piece of paper before running them to the host of Trivia night. I saw the chair of Congress banging her gavel to quiet down the attendees of the meeting before beginning.

I saw leftover Panera bread sitting on the counter in the kitchenette of my office and a Mediterranean veggie sandwich to the side being saved for me as the token to the office vegetarian. As these images accosted my brain and tears fell down my face, I couldn’t help but think about how unfair all that was. I couldn’t help but think about how I, and the Class of 2020, didn’t deserve this. I thought about the things I’ve had to deal with at OU – clowns on the loose, men with weapons near Greek housing, three University presidents, rampant racism, and how this puts the cherry on top. After much thought, I came to a similar conclusion as most of the reliable scholars on this subject: this sucks.

Continued on next page.
The first week was easy. It was like a game; the reality of the situation hadn’t quite sunken in yet. It was funny to see my classmates attending class with towels on their head fresh from the shower or with a beer in their hand as they were sitting on their porch. There was a lot of camaraderie: classmates supported each other however they could, even if it was only with dark humor.

The weeks after that were harder. I went from getting up in the morning and dressing up for work to thinking that if I used the beauty filter on Zoom, I wouldn’t need to put on any makeup. Soon, pajamas were fine. Then, I no longer needed to set up my laptop at the island in the dining room – what was the point when I could work from bed? Working from bed quickly became passively listening to lectures while on TikTok (the most popular quarantine craze.) It wasn’t long after that when I started skipping lectures. I would do all my work on the weekend and then watch TV all week, quarantined alone in my Norman apartment. Then I stopped doing the work all together.

My journey through the quarantine is similar to that of other students. Some of us are more suited to at-home learning; others are not. Regardless, we all had a tough time with school. How could professors think about deadlines for papers when we didn’t know when we would be allowed back in public?

How could our advisors send us emails requesting a response when we didn’t know where we were going to live for summer? It took some of us an entire day to respond to emails. It took some of us weeks. It doesn’t matter how long it took, really, because the impact of the quarantine was different for everyone; but we were all affected.

I wanted to be angry through this whole thing. Although I wanted, I have not. I wanted to be angry, and it is not fair that I can’t be. I wanted to be angry because I don’t know what this summer will look like. I want to be angry because I missed graduation.

I want to be angry because I’ve been alone in my apartment for two months, when I so desperately wanted things to go back to normal. I want to be angry because the economy looks the way it does just when I happen to be entering the job market. So, I am angry. Although I am, I don’t always show it. Because if I show it, someone else will become angry, too. Rationally, I know that I can’t fight a virus, but I’ve never wanted to throw a right hook at a microscopic particle so badly as I want it now.

I’m also sad. I’m sad that I’ve already said goodbye to people without even knowing it. I’m sad that there are people whose names I know, who I went to school with for four years, and who I will never see again. I’m sad because my boss was like a mother to me and now, I’ve graduated and I’m moving away without a goodbye hug. I’m sad because I looked under the clock tower, and I was disappointed.

Continued on next page.
I’m sad that the support system I so carefully crafted at OU disappeared because of one email saying that campus was closed. I’m sad that sometimes I have no energy to check in with people I know and love. I’m sad because this is not the way things were supposed to end.

I have no advice, no wisdom to grant. I have no story from which you can learn something or experience from which you can glean some clarity. I am sad. I am angry. And I’m still tired from four years of being an undergrad. I do know, though, that I was right – this is unfair. It’s unfair to you and unfair to me and to the millions of essential workers around the world putting their lives at risk to make ours better. It’s unfair to the immune-compromised who sit at their windows watching the healthy ones gathering in groups and ignoring mask requirements.

It’s unfair for the young who will spend a good portion of their summer indoors to protect their grandparents and family friends. It’s unfair and it’s OK to say so. The Class of 2020 was robbed of so much. And this is unfair.

That’s what I can offer. This is confirmation to the graduates of the Class of 2020 that you are not exaggerating. This is not your fault. And you are allowed to say that this sucks, because it really does. But we are still graduates. We still worked for our degrees, and we still learned. We still grew, and we still made it through. If we can do all this during a pandemic, we can do anything.

20 May, 2020

---

Diversity Dialogue

June 5th
Exploring the Impacts of Racialized Violence
Noon-1.30 p.m., Pre-Registration

This dialogue focuses on the impacts racialized violence and recent anti-Black violence have on individuals mentally, spiritually and physically. Panelists will provide a unique perspective on racialized violence in their fields. OU President Joseph Harroz, Jr. will give his remarks.
Sage Mauldin, President of the LGBTQ+ Faculty and Staff Resource Group, will facilitate a workshop addressing history and significance of Pride.

Panelists will discuss the impact of the SCOTUS decision on undocumented and DACA students.

Training Sessions

**Unlearning Ableism**
June 4, 9-11.30 a.m., Pre-Registration

At the end of the workshop you will:
- Define terms and concepts
- Identify history that shaped definitions
- Better understand disability in higher education
- Recognize ableism in ourselves, communities, and institutions

**Unlearning Sexism**
June 16, 9-11.30 a.m., Pre-Registration

At the end of the workshop you will:
- Define and provide examples of sexism
- Articulate personal and societal impacts of gender-based violence
- Identify how sexism impacts people
- Construct three meaningful ways to confront, resist, and educate

How to Contact Us

**OU-NORMAN**
Visit our webpage at ou.edu/diversityandinclusion
Email: diversity.inclusion@ou.edu

**HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER**
Visit our webpage at diversityandinclusion.ouhsc.edu
Email: diversity-inclusion@ouhsc.edu

**OU-TULSA**
Visit our webpage at ou.edu/tulsa/about/diversityandinclusion

Starting on June 5, visit us at ou.edu/diversity

**FOLLOW US!**
Facebook: DiversityOU
Twitter: @DiversityOU
Instagram: @DiversityOU @FacesOfOU

This publication is issued by the University of Oklahoma at no cost to the taxpayers of the State of Oklahoma. The University of Oklahoma is an equal opportunity institution. www.ou.edu/eoo