

EVERYONE HAS ROLE TO PLAY

COLUMNIST ANGIE MORRISON DISCUSSES WIDE RANGE OF EMOTIONS FRONT-LINE HEALTH-CARE WORKERS FACE #SUPPORTOURHEROES



ANGIE MORRISON
Column

As a front-line health-care worker, the last few weeks have been interesting to say the least. With the announcement of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent cases confirmed in our communities, along with the near-constant headlines depicting suffering and pandemonium, I find myself experiencing a roller-coaster of emotions.

I feel the apprehension I imagine a soldier may feel heading to the trenches of a war whose enemy fights using unknown tactics and can't be defeated with the ammunition at hand. But I realize, like professional fighters, my colleagues and I have been training for this epic battle since the onset of our careers.

Uncertainty isn't new in this profession. In fact, I would suggest it is rare to walk up to a door knowing exactly what will be found on the other side. Paramedics are experts at adjusting to ever-changing situations and we gain this experience daily as we respond to the unknown, muddle through inclement weather, troubleshoot difficult extractions, and provide treatments in imperfect environments. Our medical authority frequently updates our directives, and we adapt. We are skilled at keeping level-headed and making sound judgments based on the information available to us, while being fluid enough in our processes to make modifications when the conditions change.

Dwelling on the catastrophic potential of this virus has not been helpful for my well-being. It has caused me to feel scared, anxious, confused, and insecure. Speaking with my colleagues I know I don't feel alone in this, and I believe acknowledging this fear-based response is valuable; allowing myself

to instead choose, with intention, a more empowered reaction. Remembering and affirming all the strengths that have led me through a 20-year career on the front line thus far is helpful. I have been groomed and well-equipped to enter this battle with my peers and answer one call at a time with care, compassion, knowledge, and competence. I— along with all paramedics — will attend to business as usual because people will still require our help when they fall, become injured, or struggle with a medical problem.

However, I cannot deny I am concerned about our front-line workers' ability to maintain a strong constitution for the long-haul. We've never had to collaborate like this on a global scale, and we are depending on the assistance of our friends and neighbours. When I see groups of people congregating on the street to engage in play, or continuing to disregard the pleas of our health and government officials, I feel angry and question my reasoning for putting myself and my family at further risk. I understand most of us have trouble processing the severity of this illness, and, in my opinion, it's likely because in our culture we are shielded from bearing witness to hardship, torment, and death. Instead, there's a general sense of invincibility.

Am I scared of what may happen?

Absolutely. My coworkers and I expect to be face-to-face with this virus and be stretched to the limits of our capabilities, and I've had moments of simply wanting to hide in a hole rather than confront this. Mitigating the risk and slowing down the spread so we can endure the war would really help us feel our efforts are not in vain.

This international crisis has potential to unfold into a story of togetherness and unity of the human spirit. Every one of us has an important, valuable role to play. Frontline workers are depending on your supportive actions so we all remain physically and mentally resilient. Whether staying home, working remotely, continuing services at an essential business, self-isolating when asked, or providing health care, we are all warriors in this battle.

Angie Morrison is a paramedic for Northumberland Paramedics.

FRONT-LINE WORKERS DESERVE GRATITUDE DURING CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

GIVE A WELL-DESERVED THANK YOU WHEN YOU CAN #SUPPORTOURHEROES

We are in unprecedented times.

Ontario, like most of the rest of the world, has closed its doors to visitors. Families have closed their doors to friends and relatives. Many businesses, except for essential services, have closed their doors to customers and employees.

Yet our front-line health-care workers are being called on every day to go against the norm, to show up for work to make sure others in our society are taken care of during the COVID-19 crisis that has dealt the world a punch to the gut.

While the rest of us are in self-isolation or practising social distancing, the majority of Ontario's 60,000 front-line health-care workers are showing up to work.

Many are worried about their families falling sick to the virus. Afraid they might transfer it when they return home after a long day of work.

They deserve our admiration, respect and thanks. They embody the true definition of a hero, a prime example of that person who runs toward the emergency while everyone else is running for cover.

For many of those workers, their dedication to their job is helped by a support system at home.

Many have children and older family members they are constantly worried about. They can only do their job knowing someone is with their loved ones. Someone they can trust.

But it isn't only health-care workers who deserve our admiration during this pandemic.

The person delivering the mail, driving a bus or making sure gas is delivered to your local gas station deserves applause. The person who puts food on the shelves at your local grocery store is also working to make sure we get

through this.

As is the cashier or the person working in the back of the store to restock shelves, the hydro workers keeping the lights on and the pharmacist who makes sure residents get their needed medication.

Employees at this newspaper are also doing their part to make sure you are kept up-to-date with the latest news and information you can trust. Even the carrier who gets the newspaper to your door, using acceptable social distancing techniques, is doing their part.

There have been a few reports of angry people complaining they have to bag their own groceries or spouting off about long lines, but thankfully the vast majority of residents understand the sacrifices these heroes are making. That gratitude is growing daily in different ways: through signs in windows, delivery of treats, sign boards popping up on street corners or virtual praise on Facebook, Twitter and other social sites.

We want to do our part to help you show your gratitude and let these frontline workers know we are thinking about them.

Take a photo of your family offering your support and share it on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram using #saluteourheroes and tag us. We will select the best of the bunch to appear online and/or in our upcoming print editions.

We still aren't sure how long these unprecedented times are going to last.

But it is reassuring to know there are people headed to work each day because they realize their job is important to keeping our province running.

And for that we say thank you, thank you, thank you.

For more columns and news on the coronavirus crisis, visit our website at theifp.ca



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