

On being vulnerable

Have there been times when you just feel insecure and afraid but don't have the courage to share with others? *"Being completely vulnerable and exposed are some of the hardest things a person can ever do"* (David Goggins)

Let me start with an incident that one of my departmental doctors shared with me. "Hello, Dr S. How are you?" Dr R said as she answered her phone. "You will be rotating in the COVID Unit from tomorrow", is what Dr S uttered from the other end. He continued, "In order to de-wrinkle the rota (each rotation happened at six days), can you take the first two days off followed by two mornings and two nights?" Dr R was shocked. She froze in fear. Her pulse rate increased and she broke into sweat. Panic overtook her. She last worked in the COVID- 19 unit a few weeks ago. She was well aware of what awaited her. Yet evidently, she was not mentally prepared for another rotation and surely not another one so soon. After completing the telephonic discussion, Dr R took some time to get her thoughts together. Before going further let me say this was not a bad dream that Dr R was experiencing. This is the reality that the front liners managing COVID-19 patients are actually going through. SARS CoV-2 palpably has created storms. A medical storm for those afflicted, and a psychological storm which the health-care workers are subjected to.

When you see your junior doctor trying to steal some rest sitting on the chair with his head placed on his arms as a pillow, when another one honestly shares with you "I am scared", and another "I am worried about my family", you know these are not typical times. However, we are all normal people. No amount of theoretical pacification would suffice for anyone experiencing such a situation. It is best not to judge anyone. Every person has their backstory. We don't know these nor do we have to. There are those who have to face this situation alone. They may not be able to share this with their loved ones who stay away to avoid stressing them out. Sharing emotions and opening up to people whom you don't even know *is* hard. Everyone has their vulnerabilities. Rather than undermining these by a shining label of '#heroes', the workplace has to be open to recognizing these emotions. No one loves to suffer. However, there will always be that section of people who are ready to dare no matter what situation they are forced into. It takes a lot of heart and tons of positive self-talk to develop an armoured mind to step in these situations.

There is a card game called 'War'. Rule of the game- Player with the highest card wins. Health-care workers were dealt with a bad hand in the game. Fear, scare, insecurity, panic, anxiety. However, these feelings need not be the elements of the new COVID era. There is much power in those lowest emotions that we have to go through. To find acceptance through that power and face it willingly is what one needs to cultivate. It will be the new normal. *The winner takes it all!*

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