Wellness Weekly: Learn how your leaders ‘move forward with self-care’

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1. What are a few of your practices to help you fall asleep and stay asleep?

I have no trouble falling asleep; it has always been the joke in my family that I could fall asleep anywhere as long as my feet are up! Where I struggle, is waking up in the middle of the night. I find when that happens my mind switches on, and I think about all the things I need to do. At this point, I try really hard not to reach for my phone, but instead, focus on my breathing and tell myself that it doesn’t matter if I fall back asleep, as long as I am relaxed and resting. Not forcing myself relieves the stress of being awake, and I am usually back to sleep in no time.

2. What advice do you have for individuals trying to manage their overall well-being during a pandemic?

Be honest with yourself and give yourself permission to admit you are not okay and that you need help. As people in health care, we are used to taking care of everyone else. Now more than ever, we need support. We have such great resources at JHM such as the RISE team and mySupport; I really encourage people to explore these resources and take advantage of them. And be aware of the people around you: Asking someone how they are doing with a genuine interest might make the difference between someone struggling alone and them taking advantage of the opportunity to share how they really feel.

3. What stress reduction techniques do you use to decompress from a busy day?

I get most stressed when I look at my calendar and I don’t see a single break when I can take a 20-minute walk. When that happens, I give myself permission to choose a meeting in which I won’t be talking a lot (if you know me, you know that doesn’t happen very often), and I take the meeting on the road and walk and listen. Johns Hopkins Bayview is such a beautiful campus that even has a walking path mapped out. Listening and walking is a great use of time. My other coping technique is to not worry over the things I cannot control. It’s easier said than done, but something I remind myself of often. As a Type A personality and a “fixer,” I always want to make things better or move things along, but accepting I cannot do this every time definitely reduces the overall stress.

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