

# MONTHLY REFLECTION

## Finding our courage

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I am thinking we have all experienced fear, felt overwhelmed, or been stressed during this pandemic. This could be fear of getting infected or of infecting others. It could be fear of not being able to work or pay for our regular expenses or fear of the unknown, in general. Most of us might have felt overwhelmed by all the news and the potential consequences of the pandemic on us and on our families.

Almost all of us have successfully journeyed through some kind of hardship before, haven't we? This might have been in raising children – remember the chronic lack of sleep that we thought will never end? Some of us immigrated and started our new life in Canada from virtually nothing. Or we lost parents or other close relatives and felt like we had died, too, in the pain of missing them. What did we do then? How did we get through those times? What helped us to emerge stronger and more resilient than before?

Resilience is the capacity to adapt to stressful situations and traumatic shocks. It contributes to people's ability to maintain their well-being in the face of sudden environmental change (Seiler & Jenewein, 2019). There are two facets to resilience. The first one is resistance to stress. The second aspect is how long it takes us to reach again a kind of psychological balance following a stressful event. **Resilient people are better able to frame stressful situations in positive terms and return quickly to positive functioning despite challenging circumstances.**

People with positive coping skills have been found to have fewer symptoms of anxiety and stress during the COVID-19 pandemic (Wang et al., 2020). We may not feel very resilient at times, but thankfully, it is something that we can learn. There are many things that bring about resilience:

- Brainstorming for solutions and ways forward with others,
- Claiming a sense of control over our personal circumstances,
- Looking at things with a sense of gratitude and optimism,
- Accepting negative situations and emotions,
- Maintaining our connections with community and friends
- Maintaining our cultural traditions
- Seeking help and support,
- Helping other people.

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For many, healthy spirituality can be a part of coping. Spirituality has been linked with better resilience to psychological and physical stress, as well as to resilience to isolation and serious diseases (Le et al., 2019; Sharma et al., 2017).

Coming from the Christian faith, I have been encouraged by verses such as this one:

"Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9, ESV)

In Joshua's day as well as in ours, there are many reasons to be confused, anxious, or discouraged. God does not tell Joshua to trust in his own plans or strength, but to take refuge in God's presence. Joshua does not have to journey alone – God sends the people and the encouragement Joshua needs to get through each day ahead.

As I worked alongside many of you as a redeployed employee, I saw your courage in the midst of often-challenging situations. Some of us find this strength and courage in faith, others in the support of friends and family, and many of us are driven forward by the vision of communities where everybody belongs. You and I have seen how beautifully these communities have come together these days.

It is normal to feel anxious, discouraged, and tired after many months of working through a pandemic. My hope is that we will support one another through this time, we will access professionals and resources when needed, and we will find our courage in this community of people who care for us and who are there for us. Whether you feel that you are struggling or that you are strong, my prayer for you today is that you will find courage for now and hope for the future.

### Making the Connection

- What are some of the helpful ways you have learned to manage stress in the past? Reflect on your own past successes when going through difficult times.
- What has helped you to stay afloat during this pandemic? Have you noticed areas of personal growth in yourself or others? Let us know: [orgculture@christian-horizons.org](mailto:orgculture@christian-horizons.org).
- Have you taken some time to browse the LifeWorks site or to look into available resources for worry, anxiety, or stress? Why not make it a goal for this week: see if any of these resources or avenues of support would be of benefit to you?