

The Psychology of Crisis

*Leading Ourselves and
Shepherding Our People in
and through the Storm*

Presented by Pastor Nate Wagner

“I am tired in my soul . . . There’s a weight a pastor bears in their soul and their emotions that is inescapable,”

“There’s not been a day in these past 11 years that I have not woken up and knew that there’s something I had to do for the church...I journey with people through the highs and the lows of life, through the great moments of celebration and in the valley of death.”

“I wrestle with God, and it leaves me tired . . . I feel so distant from God. One of the greatest mistakes of pastoring is to think that because you work for God, you’re close to God.”

Rev. Howard-John Wesley
Alfred Street Baptist Church
Alexandria, Va.

For with much wisdom comes
much sorrow; the more
knowledge, the more grief.

Ecc 1:18

“This week is going to be the hardest and the saddest in most Americans' lives. This is going to be our Pearl Harbor moment, our 9/11 moment, only it's not going to be localized, it's going to be happening all over the country and I want America to understand that . . . I want Americans to understand that as hard as this week is going to be, there is a light at the end of the tunnel.”

US Surgeon General, Vice Admiral Jerome Adams (4-5-20)

COVID-19 - A Multiplicity of Challenges

- Health crisis
- Resource crisis
- Stock market and economic fall out
- Closure of Borders
- Losses – Security, Jobs, Normal, Networks, Schedules, Loved ones
- Physical and Social Isolation
- Forced Professional Changes
- Enforced Academic Shifts
- Radical and Swift Transitions in Ministry Contexts and Platforms
- Evolving and Intensifying Ambiguity, Uncertainties, and Difficulties

Survival Mode

- Fearful
- Reactive
- Self-protective
- Lack of Vision
- Diminished Wisdom
- Waning Hope

Normalize

Language

Structures

The Toll of Leading Through Crisis

ON LEADERS

The Toll of Leading Through Crisis

- Fatigue – Physical, Mental, Emotional
- Compassion Fatigue
- Vicarious Trauma
- Displacement Discomfiture
- Hyper-drive Exhaustion


The Psychological Impact of COVID-19

Life Maps Disturbed, Disrupted, & Dismantled

- Natural & Familiar Connections Suspended
- Structures and Rhythms Disrupted
- Experience of Trauma: Fight-Flight-Freeze
- Intense feeling of chaos and loss of control
- Loss of Productive Activities and Meaningful Work

Anxiety

- Stress
- Hypervigilance
- Mania
- Adrenaline Rush
- Overload
- Trauma
- Loss
- Survival Mode
- Hyperdrive

Anxiety  *Depression*

Anger / Aggression

Conflict / Violence

Addiction

Suicidality

FOUR PILLARS OF A SUICIDAL CRISIS



Hopelessness

The overwhelming belief
that the current situation
will not improve



Social Isolation

The belief that we are
alone and disconnected
from meaningful
relationships



Inability to Cope

A failure to identify
sufficient coping methods,
either internal or external



Self Hatred

Enough dislike of
ourselves to facilitate an
act of potentially lethal
violence against our own
person

Successful Leadership in Crisis

3 Ps that Undermine Resilience in Crisis

- **Personalization:** *when you believe and react as though everything is your fault.*
- **Pervasiveness:** *when the crisis is the only thing you can think about.*
- **Permanence:** *thinking that you will always be in this situation and feel this way.*

Hal Seed, Pastor Mentor

Importance vs *Influence*

Importance vs *Influence*

Pressure vs *Responsibility*

NON-ANXIOUS PRESENCE

The Need for Leaders to Project Calmness

“Someone who has clarity about his or her own life goals, and, therefore, who is less likely to become lost in the anxious emotional processes swirling about...Someone who can be separate while still remaining connected, and therefore can maintain a modifying, non-anxious, and sometimes challenging presence...Someone who can manage his or her own reactivity to the automatic reactivity of others, and therefore be able to take stands at the risk of displeasing.”

Edwin Friedman, “A Failure of Nerve”

*This means that all of us have a **primary responsibility** as leaders, as far as it depends on us, to be well-rested, soaked in prayer and contemplation, and free of **personal fear and anxiety**. We need to start and end each day as children of our heavenly Father, friends of Jesus, and grateful recipients of the Holy Spirit. We need to pray for genuine spiritual authority, rooted in the love that casts out fear, to guard and govern our lives as we lead, and trust that God will make up what is lacking in our own frail hearts, minds, and bodies.*

Andy Crouch

Importance vs *Influence*

Pressure vs *Responsibility*

Optimism vs *Hope*

*“Optimism and hope are not the same thing.
It takes courage to have hope.”* John Maxwell

*Hope is confidence that what we know now
is greater than what we don't or will.*

Stockdale Paradox

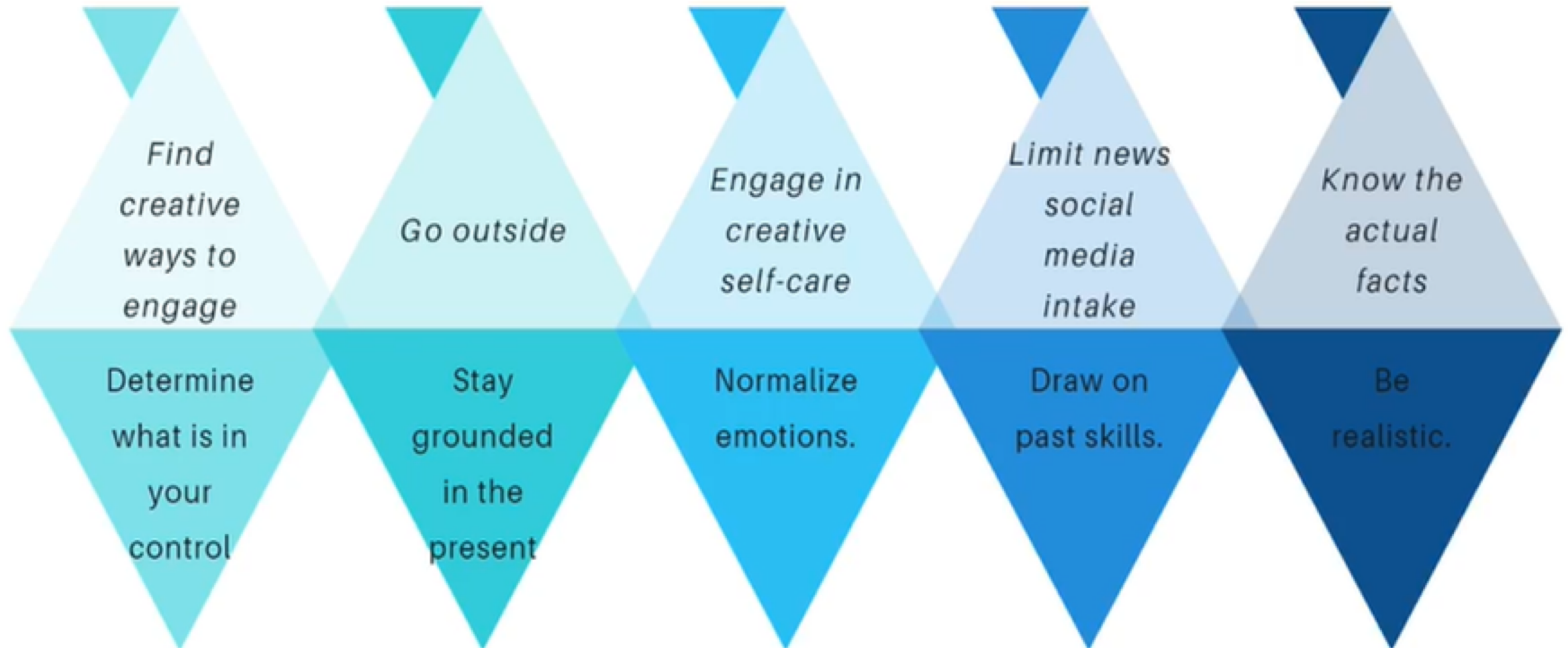
*Unwavering Hope while Being Brutally
Honest about Undeniable Realities.*

Resilience in the Disruption

Restoring Life Maps

- Restore Regular Connections – Dependable/Anticipated
- Establish Structures and Rhythms
- Deconstruct FFF: Meditation, Memorization, Cognitive Filters, Relaxation Exercises, Remembering Narratives
- Discern/Focus energy on what you have control over
- Engage daily in meaningful and measurable work

Coping with Covid-19



I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but **will have sufficient courage** so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

Phil 1:20-24

BLESS Method: *Meeting Core Needs*

The BLESS Method

Needs	Assessments		Interventions
	<i>What to Observe</i>	<i>What to Ask</i>	<i>What to Do</i>
B = Belonging	Interpersonal Interactions	Relationship Questions	Provide Social and Spiritual Support
L = Livelihood	Losses	Resource Questions	Connect to Faith-based and Community Resources
E = Emotional	Distress	Mental Health Questions	Listen and Facilitate Lament
S = Spiritual	Indicators of Faith	Religious and Spiritual Sensitive Questions	Attend to Ultimate Questions and Spiritual Meaning
S = Safety	Behavioral “red flags” (e.g., acts frightened, giving away belongings)	Threat and Harm Assessment Questions	Refer and Report

Communicating in a Crisis

Becoming A Trusted Voice

- Simple and clear: what is going on, what you are doing, what you are asking of them
- Honestly – Reality of situation
- Empathetically
- Frequently
- Inform regarding who you are in contact with
- Limit the subjects you speak about to your knowledge base
- Be hopeful not simply optimistic

Leaders Long for a Return to Normal

Often after a crisis, normal is gone and creating new normal becomes essential.

- **Motivation** becomes very important again as you remind people why you're doing what you're doing and keep them encouraged for the difficult journey into the new normal.
- **Interpretation** becomes critical as you explain what's changed, why it's changed and what that represents.
- **Transformation** matters as you cast vision for the new normal and prepare people to live and lead in the new normal.

The obstacles overcome can now be leveraged.

Christians are addicted to positive outcomes.

The problem with prematurely crafting the “good” behind what God has planned for the hard times we’re facing is that we start holding God accountable for what we ASSUME He should be doing for us.

Fear only has as much access to affect us as we give it access to our heart.

*God doesn't want to be explained or defended.
He wants to be invited in.*

Lysa Terkeurst

“Therefore we **do not lose heart**. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being **renewed day by day**. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we **fix our eyes** not on what is seen, but **on what is unseen**, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

2 Cor 4:16-18

Recommended Resources

- “Love in the Time of Coronavirus” Andy Crouch
- “How to Lead Through Crisis” Carey Nieuwhof (*7 Part Video Series*)
- “Leading Through Crisis” Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast
- “The Psychology of Crisis” Henry Cloud (RNM)
- “Spiritual Formation in the Era of Social Distancing”
Webinar with Bruce Hopler (bruce.hopler@converge.org)
- Souleader.org “*Mentoring Anxious People in Hope and Wholeness*”
- Coronavirusandthechurch.com
- Dr. Darryl Jenkins pathways2promise.org