

# Keeping You *in the Know*

May 20, 2020

## Responding to Difficult Situations

In his book “the Road Less Traveled,” Scott Peck begins with the simple sentence “Life is difficult.” Understanding that life is difficult is an important truth in learning to deal with hardship. Often we want to believe that we can walk around pain but the best way to deal with it is to acknowledge it and walk through it. When we try to ignore it or divert around it, we waste valuable energy and inevitably walk right back into the pain we thought we were going to avoid.

Dealing with difficulty requires discipline and responsibility versus pretending reality is not happening or that time and even others will make things better for us. COVID-19 has brought a set of circumstances that are significant – physically, emotionally, financially and socially. In order to respond in a healthy manner, we should focus on each of these areas and create a response plan that addresses each of them. This sense of self-responsibility is true for us as individuals and organizationally for Loews Hotels & Co as well. In this article, we will look at each of these four areas from both an individual and organizational perspective.

### **Physically**

The physical components of the COVID-19 pandemic have been enormous. Most of us could probably never imagine that we would face a circumstance where the physical implications would be this significant, having to worry about where we are physically (public spaces, airplanes, etc.), who we associate with based on whether or not they are healthy or taking the appropriate safety precautions.

Hopefully, paying attention to ourselves physically is a key learning during this time. Those who are at highest risk of being physically impacted by this virus are those with pre-existing conditions such as obesity, diabetes, auto-immune diseases, etc. Some aspects of these conditions are ones over which we have no control such as our genetics but there are many areas that are within our control such as what we eat, our willingness to exercise and ensuring we keep ourselves as physically safe as possible by paying attention to physical distancing, washing our hands frequently and wearing protective equipment such as masks and gloves.

Organizationally we have responsibility as a company as well, ensuring the safest possible environment for our Team Members and Guests. In our last two “Keeping You in the Know,” we have focused on the many actions that have been taken by the company to ensure we provide a secure and safe environment for all.

### **Emotionally**

COVID-19 has had significant emotional impact as well. First, dealing with the fear of contracting the virus for ourselves, family or friends is not easy in and of itself. The stress associated with the number of changes we have encountered in many aspects of our lives can manifest itself in anxiety and even depression.

Individually there are many things we can do to take care of ourselves emotionally. As we have focused on previously, it is important to focus on the things over which we have control instead of putting energy toward things we cannot control. Talk to others about how and what you are feeling instead of keeping your feelings inside – it is totally normal to feel many of the feelings you may be encountering such as fear, anger, isolation, lack of control, etc. The important thing is how we respond to the feelings, some

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responses being healthier than others. Medicating feelings by behaviors such as over/under eating, too much television/internet or video games, alcohol and drug use to “checkout” or not feel, etc. are a means of temporarily running away from our emotions but they will re-emerge. Find healthier ways of responding to feelings can include spending time and energy on positive contributions you can make for others or your community, accomplishing personal goals such as cleaning, learning new things or taking up hobbies such as cooking, art, writing, etc. Finally, practice gratefulness instead of allowing yourself to be a victim of circumstances.

As a company we provide emotional assistance to our Team Members and Family members through our free, confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP). If you or one of your family members needs to talk to a trained professional who can assist you with dealing with any type of emotional issue, pick up the phone and take a positive action step by scheduling an appointment.

## **Financially**

None of us could have foreseen the potential financial impact of this pandemic. The consequences have been significant for many individuals and organizations as well. Unexpected job loss or furlough, financial debt, losses in financial markets, lack of savings or financial resources, are significant stressors.

The most important thing you can do is to take action instead of hoping financial issues will go away or just get better. Talk with creditors such as landlords, mortgage lenders, financial institutions, credit card companies and others to work out a payment plan that is workable for your circumstances. Look for part-time or full-time work to bring in revenue, take advantage of the “Keeping You in the Know” job board, or determine if it is advantageous to take out a loan using your 401(k) savings to assist you through short-term hardship. File for unemployment benefits. Make sure to take advantage of the Loews Hotels & Co COVID-19 Relief Fund and receive financial assistance like thousands of our Team Members have done already

Our industry has been financially impacted by the pandemic in a way never seen before. As a company we have taken many actions to ensure financial responsibility during this time including temporarily suspending operations in the majority of our hotels, renegotiating with lenders, making difficult decisions to reduce payroll expenses, reducing operational expenses, etc. While many of these have been painful decisions, they have been necessary to ensure the financial stability of the organization.

## **Socially**

The sense of isolation associated with physical distancing, stay at home orders, not working, working remotely, closing of venues and activities such as sports, inability to visit or spend social time with family and friends, all have been a huge adjustment. We are social beings by nature (some more than others) and feeling isolated or having limited interactions with others is difficult.

Find other ways of staying connected as face-to-face interactions with others is important. There are many ways we can communicate in a safe way – visiting by phone, video communication for individual or group (family, friends, etc.), social media, the internet, etc. Also find creative ways in which you can see others in safe ways such as outdoor spaces using physical distancing and protection such as masks. Connecting with others is an important means of staying emotionally healthy.

As an organization, we have increased our use of video conferencing through Microsoft Teams and Zoom as a means of staying more socially connected with other Team Members while working virtually.

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Hopefully, the circumstances we have encountered, both individually and organizationally, will be important learning opportunities as we move forward and we will all be stronger as a result of the important but difficult decisions we have had to make. It is important for us all to reflect on what we will do differently going forward based on what we have learned.

## **COVID-19 Disaster Relief Fund Update**

As of today, approximately 6,000 applications have been received with nearly 4,900 approvals and Team Members receiving funding. The Benefits/HR Team is working to obtain financial documentation from those who have not sent their information in order to be approved.