

Transcript Details

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3 Ways to Provide Care & Compassion in a Pandemic

Dr. Greenberg:

Coming to you from the ReachMD studios, this is *COVID-19: On the Frontlines*. I'm Dr. Michael Greenberg, your host.

The universe always seems to work perfectly, even though while it's happening in the moment we can't see its logic. There are silver linings to crises and problems and pandemics. And if you've ever listened to any of my shows or go back and review them, you'll see that I'm a physician who's really worked on a vision of healthcare focused on care and compassion rather than money.

It's not about big-time stuff. It's not about recognition, fame or money. The great reward in life is knowing that you helped in some small way to make this world a better place, and it's something we all can do.

So I have some suggestions during this time of COVID pandemic on things we all can do. First suggestion is, say hello to everybody. As I'm walking into the hospital past staff members who are leaving from the earlier shift, I make it my business to say, "Hello," "Good morning," look at them in the eyes and mean it, especially when people are wearing masks. We really need to have that human connection, not just with patients but with our staffs. I've seen some people even draw smiley faces on their masks.

Number 2 is humor. Keep your humor. Every morning when I walk into the hospital we get our temperature taken, and as the nurse says, "I'm going to take your temperature," I kind of laugh and say, "Okay, I'll let you do that if you promise to give my temperature back to me when I leave at the end of the day." It always starts them laughing—or I find some other joke that I can do.

Number 3, listen and be present. This is really important. I think these days people need to be listened to more than ever. For some reason Mother Nature gave us 2 ears and 1 mouth, which means we're supposed to listen twice as much as we speak—because we're all scared. And while you're listening and communicating, don't limit yourself to just conversations about the patient's medical condition. Talk to them about their fears. Talk to them about how they're doing. Ask them how they're doing and share your humanity. I let my patients know my fears and the problems that I'm facing and how we're all doing this together. When you humanize yourself as a doctor, it allows your patients to be human. I know that, as doctors, sometimes we think our job is just doing the procedures or handing out the medications, but it's really more than that. Patients come to us to be loved and to be listened to, and it's our responsibility.

Be alert for the opportunities that we do have, both in the local media and with partners and patients, to demonstrate calm and evenness and not to buy into rumors or fear. Your local television station or radio station may call you for a story. Be available, be listening and be calm. We still have our doctors' lunchroom open, and we are doing social distancing, but it's a chance to talk to my fellow physicians about how I'm doing things, how I'm coping with things.

So, what's the bottom line here? The bottom line is, the more human we are, the more we are present, the more opportunities will show up for us to be of service to help. As physicians, I think we have a responsibility beyond the medical things that we do for our patients to be really listening and be present. Listen beyond the disease. Listen for patients' fears. Listen for your own fears. Listen for solutions. We're all in this together, and the more we humanize this, the better everyone will be. And I hope we keep that humanity with us long after this pandemic is gone.

For ReachMD, this is *COVID-19: On the Frontlines*. I'm Dr. Michael Greenberg. For continuing access to this and other episodes and to add your perspectives to the fight against this global pandemic, visit us as [ReachMD.com](https://reachmd.com). Thank you for listening.