Thursday Memo – March 7, 2019

This week Tina Runyan, (Director of Behavioral Science for the Worcester Family Medicine Residency Program and Director of the Post-doctoral Fellowship in clinical health psychology in primary care) writes this week about a unique role she holds and the powerful observations she is afforded. She reminds us that all of us as care providers have our vulnerabilities and need to be able to have some place to go to share and be cared for and have someone like Tina just let us cry with her.

She wrote to me about this piece:

*I am fortunate to be one of the house officer counselors available to GME residents and fellows. Most of the residents I see are psychologically healthy, imbued with a deep capacity for empathy and compassion that is being tested if not threatened. Nothing can prepare you for the realities of medical residency. Many describe a culture of detachment and the demand for stoicism as the merciless pace of clinical care intensifies.*

You can respond with comment to Tina at Christine.Runyan@umassmemorial.org or to the list serve directly. Enjoy.

**CRY.**

It is rare for someone to leave my office without use of the tissues.

Sometimes they open with tears, but more often is a slow, gradual build before the levees in their eyes yield to the pressure.

I imagine the tears are like snowflakes, no two exactly alike …

A tear for their present suffering, a few for the past, some born of fear and uncertainty about the future, and of course, an incalculable mix of all three.

I want to know all of them. To honor each tear. I want to scream, “No, do not wipe them away!” I want to hide the tissues but worry this may seem uncaring.
After all this time, I still find myself unequipped and inelegant when someone apologizes for crying, saying it is so unlike them. I might make a joke to ease their discomfort or say, “It’s okay. I’m used to it.” I might simply nod and say nothing.

No one apologizes for their bleeding wound. Tears are how the injured heart and soul bleed.

So what I want to say is this: “Yes, Cry. Cry! Cry for the young parent with terminal cancer. Cry for the grieving widow whose beloved just passed on. Cry for your own miscarriage. And cry for the tragedies of poverty and violence you tend to day after day.”

I want to tell them how fortunate they are to still be able to cry.