

Coping with bad news in an often crazy world

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On any given day, a vast amount of news stories hit the airwaves or fly off the printing presses, concerning local, national, or world matters. Some of these reports are cheery or uplifting, such as peace talks between warring countries, successful rescue missions of stranded hikers, or royal weddings. However, a great deal of the news is negative, comprising topics ranging from terrorist attacks and school shootings, to escalating tensions between nuclear superpowers and detrimental political scandals, to those that we are all very familiar with this time of year- devastating hurricanes and wildfires.

In the age of technology in which we find ourselves in, it is easier and faster than ever to receive bad news. You can get live updates about all manner of depressing and disturbing reports by simply pulling out your phone or turning on your TV. And even though the vast majority of the sad and harrowing news you'll consume throughout your life will not directly impact you (e.g. genocide or famine in a faraway country, oil spills and other environmental disasters, political scandals, etc.), it can affect you in more subtle ways psychologically.

If you feel as though the news has gotten worse in recent times, you are not alone. Cindy Otis, a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analyst, recently took to social media to share tips she learned from her career experience for reducing stress and depression in the wake of taking in disturbing news. In an email, Otis wrote, "It was important in my career to find ways of coping with the deluge of information so that I could be useful to the federal government while still maintaining my humanity."

Utilizing Twitter, Otis first described some of the health risks associated with exposure to

disturbing news content. These included complacency, wherein bad news becomes normalized and news consumers become numb to how upsetting it is; paralysis, which occurs when individuals feel overloaded by bad news intake and do not know how to proceed; crisis perspective, the state of feeling that everything is a crisis; and depression. According to Otis, "There are also serious consequences to living a negative content overloaded life. I had a colleague who didn't know he had stage 4 brain cancer because the symptoms were the same as our very stressful careers - exhaustion, random fevers, stress, and dizziness."

Otis went on to provide eight tips for coping with bad news in the media which she found useful in her high-stress career, but can also be put to good use by anyone who is overwhelmed by the never-ending stream of depressing news. They are detailed here:

1. Take action: Participating in community service or other volunteer work minimizes the stress from hearing bad news by allowing you to work toward change. "Service of some kind in your community lets you be a part of SOLUTIONS. You will see RESULTS when otherwise you'd feel helpless."

2. Know your limits: Otis offered this advice as a counterpart to tip No. 1. It simply isn't possible to solve all the world's problems, no matter how much community service or activism you participate in. "You aren't a 7/11. You can't always be open."

3. Research before panicking: Otis advises that you should not stress out or despair over news reports until you look into it beyond the eye-catching headline, which often exaggerates the severity of the story. "If it has happened before, (it) can be hugely comforting to know how it was resolved and/or what might happen next."

4. Get up and move: "Put the phone away, turn off the TV, log out

of Twitter. Go for a walk, sit outside, get some coffee, call a friend ... Our brains and bodies need breaks from stressful content."

5. Set rules: "In the civilian world, I set blocks of time each day where I turn everything off - no news or social media. Let yourself recharge so you can keep fighting later." Adopting your own rules like Otis can help you limit your exposure to disturbing news reports, and enable you to focus on more positive things.

6. Avoid dark holes: "It's easy to get sucked into the swirl of bad news. You watch a gruesome YouTube video and the next one is all queued up to play right after it. Focus on one issue at a time. Deal (with) it before moving on."

7. You need fun: "When there is suffering, war, despair, etc. around you, it's easy to feel guilty when you have fun, feel happy, (or) have a

good meal with friends. You NEED these things. You will be better able to do good in the world if you let yourself have these things."

8. Talk to someone: Otis claimed in her post that simply talking, whether to a therapist, significant other or colleague will greatly enhance the coping process.

Gail Saltz, a medical doctor who writes for *Health* magazine, compiled a similar list. Many of the elements are similar to Otis' list, but the list contains additional tips that you may find helpful. These include limiting your daily intake of caffeine, getting more sleep at night, and accepting that some things are out of your control.

This ties into a statement that Nicole Rensenbrink of Healthy U, a licensed clinical social worker, made to the *Illinois Valley News*: "I think it's important for people to have greater senses of meaning than is

provided by the human behavior they hear about or observe in the news and their personal lives. Whether it's beliefs in God, quantum wonders, or something else that transcends the unpleasant sides of humanity, we all need anchors to keep us psychologically strong."

As summarized by Otis, the stories we read about in newspapers or watch on TV can be quite depressing, more so, perhaps, than ever before. That is why it is so imperative to use the information in this article to cope with the stress of living in such tumultuous times. Remember that you are only one person in a world of billions. You are not responsible for the world's problems, but rather for living a healthy, happy life. Therefore, it is irrational to let the craziness of the world stress you out and disrupt your own life.



(Photo by Dan Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

Smoke filled the fire camp at Joseph Stewart State Recreation Area Thursday, Aug. 9.

SELMAC ...

Continued from A-1

According to the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, milfoil can form dense canopies, which in turn rob deeper dwelling species of light; "clog water intakes at power generation facilities and potable water intakes;" and also, "provide habitat for...and may increase populations of some species of mosquitoes."

Milfoil is predominantly spread by boat traffic because of its asexual means of reproduction, commonly referred to as "fragmentation." The fragments, after hitching a ride on boat trailers to new bodies of water, then form brand-new colonies and can grow up to 2 inches per day.

"The real thing is: How do you take care of milfoil?" Wright said. "There are definitely a few different ways. One of those would be a biological approach, which is where you would introduce some kind of species in order to eat it, but

we're really not interested in introducing new bugs or other types of species to the lake. That in itself can have a lot of other issues. It's expensive and it doesn't always work."

Other options range from herbicides, which are generally unpopular when used in public waters, to dredging, which is extremely expensive; however, a manual effort can be implemented to manage the milfoil by using specialized equipment designed to cut the weeds.

Brought together by a monumental effort from passionate fisherman Jim Tehan, volunteers from Middle Rogue Steelheaders and Southern Oregon Fly Fishers met at Lake Selmac June 21 to test the new equipment, which, valued at around \$7,000, includes a Jensen Lake Mower™ as well as rakes and nets.

According to Wright, the Jensen Lake Mower attaches to the boat and cuts the weeds at a certain height, thereby creating a path for boats to safely venture out into the lake from the boat ramps.

"Most of the tools are meant so that you're standing on

the edge of the lake and you take this device and you throw it out," Wright said. "And as you pull it in, it is literally dragging and cutting the weeds out of the ground. And then you have nets on top of that you throw out and try and get all those loose bits that are floating. You're never going to get them all but you're trying to get the majority."

But because of the activity at Lake Selmac due to the wildfires, the milfoil management effort has been temporarily put on hold; however, Tehan hopes to get back at it as soon as he can... and he is looking for help.

"Right now there's about eight of us working. I'd like to get two groups working in two different areas," Tehan said. "And what we need is someone with a boat or something that can help drag the weeds out of the lake onto the shore...and maybe someone with a trailer we can load them into."

The volunteer group meets at 9 a.m. every Thursday at Teal Boat Ramp. Rubber boots and grubby clothing are recommended. For further information, please contact Jim Tehan at 541-660-5232 or jtehan2@gmail.com.

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