LESSONS FROM CRISIS MANAGEMENT TRAINING

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Category: Observations

One of the advantages of having been in mission leadership is that I have taken a number of courses and workshops in crisis management. You never know when some background in hostage negotiation might come in handy. Though given that in one role-playing exercise, I managed to have a school and all of the hostages blown up, you may not want to engage me as a negotiator.

However, I have picked up some things which may be useful to people during the current slow-burn crisis that we are living through and I thought I'd share them.

Time slows down. When you are facing a crisis, especially a long drawn out one, everything seems to take far longer. I've seen a number of social media posts saying that March 2020 lasted for 300 days or more - that's exactly how it feels. The apparent elongation of time means that many people start to feel very lethargic and become unproductive. It's okay for all of the social-media gurus to tell us that we should use this time for learning a new language or a musical instrument. For some of us, just getting to the end of the day in one piece is a triumph.

Be kind to yourself. Don't add unnecessary stress to your life at a time when you might already be struggling.

We all react to crises in different ways. Some people click into overdrive and (contrary to what I've just written) manage to get an awful lot done in a very short time - however if things carry on, these folks tend to burn out and get very low after a while. If this is you, be on the watch out for the symptoms. Others get irritable, some become manically cheerful (it's hard to know which of these is the worst for others), some become very morose and some people lose their libido altogether, while others find that it becomes much more active.

The thing with intense emotions is that they will find a way to express themselves. You may find that you become irrationally weepy; crying at silly things that have nothing to do with the current crisis. That's fine. If you need to weep, weep. The key is to try to avoid negative or harmful emotional expressions. It's a cliche, but physical activity is a good way of dealing with anger; go for a run, dig the garden but don't shout at your family!

Be realistic with yourself. Learn to recognise your own stress reactions and take steps to manage them. Above everything else, be kind to one another. If a family member is more irritable or weepy than usual, don't compound things by getting irritated in turn. Take a step back, recognise the stress they are facing and cut them a bit of slack. Likewise, when you react inappropriately, recognise what

you have done and apologise. With weeks of isolation ahead of us, maintaining good, forgiving relationships is key.

Prayer is important. Take time to talk through the situation with your heavenly Father and don't be afraid to let him know how you feel about it. Jeremiah and some of the Psalmists had good moans about what they were living through and you can do it too. However, we need to keep a biblical perspective. We are promised that trials will come, but also that God will use them to refine us and make us more like him. We are also promised that one day, the trials will end. It may seem that the coronavirus lockdown is lasting for eternity, but it isn't. One day, we won't be isolated, but we will be gathered with a multitude that no one can number, singing the praises of the Lamb who died to forgive our sins and to heal the broken creation.