

POLICY WATCH – October 2020

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There is something in the air and it isn't pumpkin spice. This is a new smell – a combination of anxiety, hope, dread and grit. We are living through an era unlike any other with a confluence of events that is shocking all of our systems, from our bodies to our body politic, from our household budgets to the global economy. This is new and it is awful. As we realize that after eight months, we don't know when this misery will end, it is a time of reckoning for many of us. We have COVID fatigue and wonder how much more we can take.

In this issue, we administer psychological first aid. We look for ways to restore hope and cope with the challenges we face. A quote that struck a chord is from the Roman poet, Ovid: "Be patient and tough. Someday this pain will be useful to you." Can we turn this pain into something useful? Can we take these lessons we are learning and become more resilient and empathetic?

It is a good goal. Dr. Noelle Nelson advises, throw yourself a 5 minute pity party and then move on. Nelson says, "Let's keep our moments of dark despair as brief as possible and amp up our times of appreciation. If we do, we'll come out of this challenging situation stronger and better than ever." And Nancy Haugen advises we focus on what's under our control "to help with this resilience-building shift, by framing your goals as 'I choose,' which involves a sense of agency, instead of 'I want.'"

The months ahead are when we celebrate the holidays with family and friends. This year will be different. But it is important to remember the goal is physical distancing not social distancing. Our relationships with family, friends, co-workers and community members have never been more important so we need to stay connected. Let's choose optimism and hope for better days ahead.

Best,

Cynthia

NBLC Urges NO Vote on More Taxes

Few things are closer to home than being able to afford to feed your family and keep a roof over your head. As a result of this pandemic that is lasting far longer than expected and taking a deeper toll than predicted, many Sonoma County residents and businesses are struggling at depression-type levels.

Unemployment remains high. Many businesses are failing and there are many others who fear that when winter comes, it will be the final blow to their ability to survive. Costs are rising for childcare, insurance, and groceries.

Remarkably, this is the time that the County of Sonoma, Sonoma County Transportation Authority, and many of the cities have chosen to ask you to pay more taxes. Now, during an economic crisis, they want you to ante up for a total of 8 more taxes spread throughout the county. During a period of great uncertainty and chaos, local elected officials think you should dig deep in your pockets and pay more taxes based on expenditure plans that do not address the problems we face now, but the problems we faced pre-pandemic. Now, during a time of record high unemployment with the prediction that almost half of the jobs lost will not come back, the bureaucrats want you to pass some taxes that have no end and others that don't kick in for years and then go on for a decade or two.

It is time to take a tactical pause and say, "No, Not Now!" to more taxes. The Sonoma County 2020 Tax Moratorium Coalition urges you, the voters and taxpayers of Sonoma County, to send a clear message to our elected representatives that our hard-earned tax dollars are precious and the limited resources we have need to be respected. We have changed because of the pandemic; we have had to adjust how we live to what we can now afford. Government needs to do the same instead of continually looking for bailouts from us.

Let's defeat these measures and then talk about what the priorities are and work together to find the best way to fund them, after we survive this crisis. Please join the 2020 Tax Moratorium Coalition leaders – Santa Rosa Metro Chamber, Sonoma County Farm Bureau, North Coast Builders Exchange, and North Bay Leadership Council – in voting No on ALL tax measures. For more information, please go to www.2020taxmoratorium.com.

Please Vote No on:

Sonoma County:

Measure DD

Measure Q

Measure S, *forever tax*

Measure U, *forever tax*

Measure O

Measure R, *forever tax*

Measure T, *forever tax*

Measure V, *forever tax*

Marin County:

Measure R

State:

Prop 15

Prop 21

Please Vote YES on:

Petaluma Health Care District, Measure CC

NBLC Candidate Endorsements

Santa Rosa City Council:

Chris Rogers, District 5

Eric Christensen, District 7

Rohnert Park:

Jake Mackenzie, District 4

San Rafael:

Mayor:

Kate Colin – for all of San Rafael

City Council:

John Gamblin, District 4

Maika Llorens Gulati, District 1

Santa Rosa Junior College Board:

Kerry Rego

Marin Community College Board:

Phil Kranenburg

Eva Long

Stephanie O'Brien

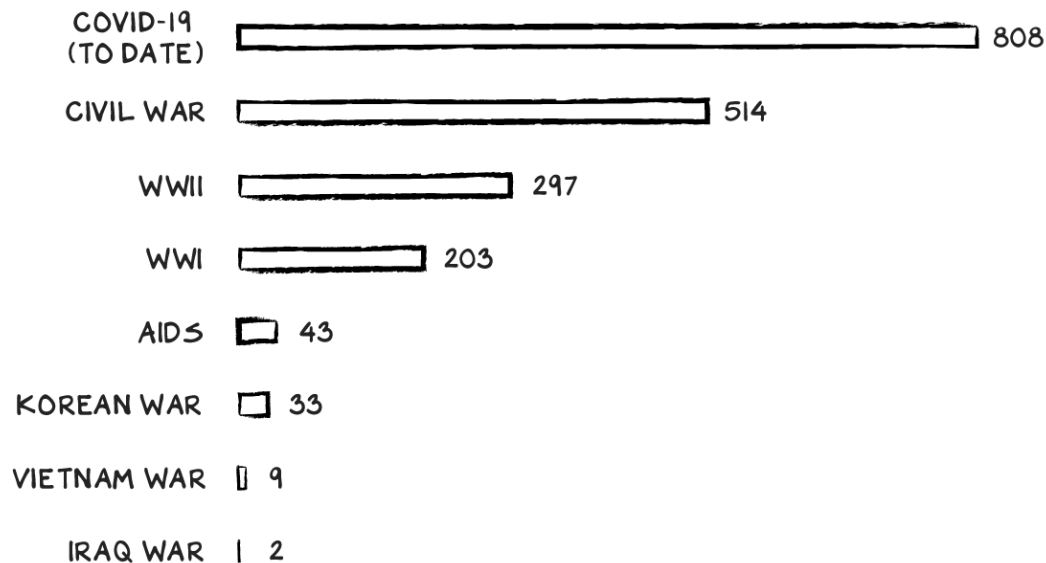
Stuart Tanenberg

Psychological First Aid

The pandemic continues, we are losing more people daily to the virus than any other tragic event in our history. Couple the horrific deaths with an economic crisis equal to the Great Recession, an election that may be the most important of our lifetimes and the intense level of social unrest, we get a plethora of things fraying our psyches. Many are stressed, afraid and having sleepless nights. We keep thinking, it can't get worse and then it does.

U.S. DEATHS PER DAY

TO OCTOBER 23, 2020



SOURCE: USA TODAY, NYT, CDC, AIDS DATA FROM 2018. COVID-19 DEATHS MEASURED ACROSS TIME PERIOD FROM JAN 21-OCTOBER 23.

What to do with the awful feelings that we are so far from normal that normal may no longer exist? There has to be a way to get through this. How do we keep hope alive and be optimistic about the future?

One tactic is found in [“We’ll Get Through It”: How To Accept The Uncertainty Of COVID-19, \(Link\)](#) where Gretchen Rubin suggests that we lean into the uncertainty and fear. She says, “But what if, rather than fighting that uncertainty and getting anxious about it, we just accepted it — or even leaned into it?”

“One of the things that I’m really doing is trying to understand, like, well, there is so much uncertainty, there’s loss, but what am I learning? What am I gaining? What insights am I having?” she says. “Some things are working worse, but some things are working better, and can I gain from that?”

To help her stay focused, she is reminded of the line from the Roman poet Ovid where he says, “Be patient and tough. Someday this pain will be useful to you.”

“I think we all just have to hang in there and hope that one day this pain will be useful,” she says. “And now I think we’re really settling into this different state, as you said, where we realize it’s going to be uncertain for a long time and that we don’t really know what the horizon is and things might move forward and they might move backward.” Rubin points out that things that seemed far in the future have now drawn closer like the upcoming holidays, and she says, “Well, now that’s all coming real, and so I think people’s feelings are changing.”

“So I do think we need to be realistic, but it's also true that one of the ways that we can feel better about what's going through is if we do feel like we've made good use of the time. And if you feel like, 'Well, I was safer at home, and so I did organize my basement or I did update my resumé or I did take that online course or I did learn how to use that new software,' that will make us feel better going forward because it's something good that came from this. We were able to make good use of it. And that's comforting because there's so much we can't do. I think each of us has to decide for ourselves. Like, am I going to ask more of myself or am I going to cut myself some slack?”

Another tip from Rubin is to focus on your relationships. She says, “If you're going to think about happiness, the key to happiness is strong relationships, if you had to pick one thing. So as you're going through this time, really pay attention to your relationships. Staying connected with other people, going out on the street and smiling at people, your neighbors, over the masks, looking for ways to feel connected to other people, and also, you know, to do good in the world, to feel connected to your larger community because maybe you can't control the virus, but you could do virtual volunteering or you could do virtual babysitting for somebody who's got little kids at home and can't get any work done. If we do good, we feel good, and that will make us feel closer to the people in our lives and closer to our community. And so that is something that's within our control that will really boost our spirits in a tough time.”

Dr. Noelle Nelson, author of [Power of Appreciation and Happy Healthy...Dead](#), writes in [Optimism's Impact On Mind And Body During COVID-19 Crisis](#), ([Link](#)) that “Studies have shown us repeatedly that optimists have stronger immune systems than those who don't have an optimistic outlook. Strengthening our immune system is our body's defense against disease,” says Nelson. “We already know that the coronavirus is deadliest among those with compromised or weakened immune systems. Maintaining and developing a strong immune system can go a long way toward our staying healthy.”

If you're not a natural-born optimist, Nelson suggests two steps to get you on track during these tough times.

“Institute A 5-Minute Pity Party. A 5-Minute Pity Party is where you acknowledge your frustration over the aspects of your life that have been negatively affected by the coronavirus. You've lost your job, you're struggling with homeschooling your kids or you're mourning the complete shutdown of your social life. ‘Whatever the reason or reasons,’ says Nelson, “it's time to release your anguish. Get it out of your system (i.e., rant, rave, cry) safely and privately; once your five minutes are up, move to step two.”

“Value What You Can Today. Look around you. What can you appreciate about your life right here, right now? You say “nothing? ‘There is still plenty to appreciate. It can be as simple as appreciating the roof over your head or you're in good health. Continue to look for other reasons to appreciate. Be genuine. By doing so, these thoughts of appreciation will have a dramatic, positive impact on your immune system,’ suggests Nelson.”

“Optimism isn't a cure-all. Yet in every crisis, there is opportunity for new growth and new inspiration when seen with an optimistic eye,” says Nelson. “Let's keep our moments of dark despair as brief as possible and amp up our times of appreciation. If we do, we'll come out of this challenging situation stronger and better than ever.”

Going a step further is the advice that we need to practice psychological first aid. Stacy Colino in [The pandemic proves we all should know 'psychological first aid.' Here are the basics](#), ([Link](#)) tell us how.

George S. Everly, a clinical psychologist and professor of international health in the Center for Humanitarian Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and author of The Johns Hopkins Guide to Psychological First Aid, says, “The pandemic is like the never-ending story,” says Everly. “What makes this more psychologically toxic is that we keep receiving new impacts” as resurgences and new outbreaks occur, and more collateral damage to life and work, as we knew them, becomes apparent.

Colino reinforces that never-ending story, she says, “Meanwhile, on a daily, sometimes hourly, basis we’re subjected to bad news from multiple directions — not just about the pandemic, the economy and racial issues, but about political scandals, civic tensions, fires, floods, conspiracy theories and more — without the in-person support of friends, extended family and colleagues because of the pandemic. ‘The world seems more uncertain than ever — uncertainty is a powerful toxin,’ Everly says.”

Fortunately, you can dial down your stress reactivity and come to your own emotional rescue — or that of others — with PFA-based strategies. Here’s how to put the actual components of PFA into practice for yourself and those you care about:

Address basic bodily needs. Make a conscious effort to consume nutritious foods, stay hydrated, get enough sleep, do some form of physical activity every day, and avoid using substances such as alcohol or cigarettes to cope, advises Kaushal Shah, a psychiatric researcher at Griffin Memorial Hospital in Norman, Okla., who has done research on PFA. Besides being important for your overall health, these healthy lifestyle practices are a vital part of PFA.

Avoid further harm. Protecting people from additional distress is a key aspect of PFA, and there are several ways you can do this for yourself and others. First, check to make sure conditions are physically safe, then take steps to ensure emotional “safety” by treating others and yourself with respect and compassion. “Remind yourself that whatever you’re feeling or going through right now is perfectly normal,” advises Nancy Haugen, a clinical psychologist in San Francisco. “That [acknowledgment] tends to bring down some anxiety.”

In addition, try to protect yourself from information overload. New research, involving 6,514 adults in the United States, found that people who have higher daily hours of covid-19-related media exposure and exposure to conflicting covid-19 information in the media are at greater risk for pandemic-related acute stress and depressive symptoms. To prevent this effect, limit your media exposure.

Keep calm to carry on. Maintaining a gentle tone of voice can have a calming effect on distressed people around you. In addition, remind yourself and encourage others to do a relaxing activity — such as yoga, mindfulness meditation, deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation — every day. This will help you de-stress in a given moment and maintain your psychological equilibrium, Shah says.

At regular intervals throughout the day — or when you feel stress-overload coming on — hit the pause button on what you’re doing and focus on deep breathing. “You can override stress with deep breaths that cause the diaphragm to go up and down. Then the brain starts to calm down,” explains Haugen. Moreover, research has found that engaging in diaphragmatic breathing reduces stress hormone levels and blood pressure, as well as subjective measures of stress.

Set priorities. In tumultuous times, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed with worries and fears. That’s why PFA encourages people to consider their most urgent needs, including how to prioritize and address them, versus what can wait. To that end, it helps to distinguish between what you can and can’t control and to

encourage loved ones to do the same. Then focus on the situations you can do something about, such as how you protect yourself and your family, how you behave toward others and how you spend your free time. To help with this resilience-building shift, Haugen recommends framing your goals as “I choose,” which involves a sense of agency, instead of “I want.”

Build hope. Especially during periods of uncertainty, it’s important to stay positive with learned or active optimism and remain forward-focused, Everly says. One effective way to do this is to consciously focus on what’s going *right* in your life now. Research has found that having a ratio of three positive emotions to every negative emotion helps people flourish. You can stack the deck in your favor by “looking for positive moments and holding onto them throughout the day,” says Haugen. If you want to formalize the process, consider keeping a gratitude journal. A 2019 study found that adults who did this for 14 days experienced an increase in positive moods, happiness and life satisfaction, as well as a decrease in negative moods and depressive symptoms.

Connect with others. “The single best predictor of human resilience is support from other people,” Everly says. So, help people identify sources of social support in their lives with a reminder that the goal is to practice “physical distancing,” not “social distancing,” during the pandemic. Reach out to friends and family members on social media and make an effort to rekindle old friendships by phone, text, email or video conferencing. Also, consider establishing your own coronavirus-safe pod or bubble so you can spend in-person time with supportive people.

Practice good communication. When people are distressed, practice active listening by giving them your undivided attention and letting them take their time expressing themselves, rather than pressuring them to talk or immediately providing advice. These are key PFA skills. Try to truly understand the person’s concerns and feelings and show empathy and use supportive words and phrases that reflect the key points he or she made.

Reinforce coping skills. Ask someone who is distressed how he or she coped with difficult situations in the past and encourage the person to use those strengths and strategies to handle the current situation. (Do the same exercise yourself.) This contributes to a sense of confidence and competence that will allow them to face and manage the current challenge. It also builds resilience. PFA practices may be among the coping skills you call upon to face another difficult situation in the future.

NBLC Profile in Leadership

Michelle Ausburn, Partner in Assurance and Craft Beverage Industry Group Leader, BPM

Michelle Ausburn is a Partner in Assurance and Craft Beverage Industry Group Leader at BPM. She is a 5th generation Californian who grew up in the agricultural community of California’s Central Coast where her great-grandparents were cattle ranchers. She is proud to be one of the first in her family to graduate from college. Michelle has lived in the North Bay since 2002.



Her current practice focuses on assurance services for wineries, vineyards, negociants, food and beverage manufacturers, agriculture, and real estate, both publicly-held and private. Michelle says, “If you have to be an auditor, I can’t imagine more fun industries to work in.”

In 2012, she joined BPM, one of the largest Bay Area based full-service accounting and consulting firms with six offices including Santa Rosa and St. Helena. BPM has the depth and breadth of services equivalent to a national or international firm and is extremely client-service oriented - they refer to their delivery model as “big firm know-how...small firm know-you.” It’s a strong differentiator for the firm in the North Bay.

In addition to providing traditional audit and review services, she offers guidance in the areas of business combinations, consolidations, lease accounting, inventory valuation, revenue recognition, and evaluation of internal control. Michelle has experience working with companies in the start-up phase through ownership transition, including IPO. She also oversees employee benefit plan audits.

Michelle has served on several boards including on the Executive Committee of North Bay Leadership Council, Treasurer for the Napa/Sonoma Chapter for Women for WineSense (2011-2013) and Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair for The Healdsburg School (2013-2015). Since 2009, she has served on the planning committee for the Cal CPA Wine Industry Conference where she has also presented on GAAP accounting and reporting in the wine industry. Michelle has also participated as a speaker at the Wine Industry Technology Symposium and through Sonoma State University’s Wine Business Program.

She is active in the Firm’s recruiting efforts at SSU and leads the Firm’s WIN! Initiative – a program dedicated to creating opportunities that improve women leadership participation from its current level to a level that is more reflective of women in the workforce.

Michelle received a Women in Business Award in 2014 in recognition of her business accomplishments and contributions to the community.

Members in the News

North Bay Business Journal Names KostECKA as New Publisher

The North Bay Business Journal has named Norma KostECKA as publisher, succeeding Brad Bollinger.

North Bay Business Journal Publisher Brad Bollinger to Retire in 2021

One of Brad Bollinger’s biggest pleasures is to go out to lunch or meet with businesspeople and hear what’s going on in their company and their industry.

Bank of America Issues 2020 Human Capital Management Report

Bank of America today published its 2020 Human Capital Management Report, which provides the latest information and progress against its continued focus to be a great place to work for its more than 200,000 teammates around the world.

NELSONtalks 10/22 Webinar to Focus On History and Future of Race Relations in the Workplace

https://marketing.nelsonjobs.com/acton/media/11006/webinar-registration-race-relations-and-your-business-nelson?utm_campaign=HGS_NelsonTalksQ4_Client_all_all&utm_medium=email&utm_source=acton&sid=TV2:0Q14Uf4tE

Nelson Featured in Marin Independent Journal

The article coincides with Nelson's 50th anniversary in 2020 and features the company's history and founding of its first office in San Rafael.

Nelson Grants Three Wishes Through Make-A-Wish Foundation

Nelson has been a longtime supporter of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of the Greater Bay Area.

Dominican University of California Announces Dr. Nicola Pitchford as the 10th President

The Board of Trustees has voted to appoint Dr. Nicola Pitchford as the 10th President of Dominican University of California.

Sonoma State Student Receives Prestigious CSU Award for her Academic and Personal Accomplishments

Growing up in a small, rural central California town, Sonoma State University student Therese Azevedo has always defied expectations.

Bank of America Recognized as Top Global Bank on Fortune's "Change the World" List

For the fourth year, Fortune has recognized Bank of America on its "Change the World" list for the company's leadership and long-standing support of community development financial institutions (CDFIs), and for the impact of the additional financing it channeled through that network as part of the Payment Protection Program (PPP).

Catholic Charities: Resilience and Service on the Frontlines

Our Catholic Charities CYO Camp programs are essential for the families and communities we serve.

Cornerstone Properties Offering Special Discounts to the coLAB

Cornerstone Properties' Santa Rosa coworking space coLAB is introducing special discounts for individuals in need of a safe space to perform their remote work.

Sonoma Raceway Opens 50 Acres Campground to Evacuees

Sonoma Raceway has opened its 50 Acres campground to evacuees seeking temporary refuge from the Northern California fires.

Congratulations to the NBLC Members Who Made the 2020 'Best Places to Work' for San Francisco North Bay

The Business Journal on Tuesday announced the companies selected as this year's "Best Places to Work" in the North Bay.

Bank of America Sponsors 'Tested by Fire' : Works by Tim Carl at the Napa Valley Museum

Napa Valley photojournalist Tim Carl has captured the beauty and devastation of the wine country wildfires for several years, creating vivid portraits of communities under siege.



Who We Are

Over twenty five years ago, business leaders founded the North Bay Leadership Council on a simple premise: We can accomplish more by working together. Today, the Council includes 54 leading employers in the North Bay. Our members represent a wide variety of businesses, non-profits and educational institutions, with a workforce in excess of 25,000. As business and civic leaders, our goal is to promote sound public policy, innovation and sustainability to make our region a better place to live and work. For more information: Call

707.283.0028 / E-mail info@northbayleadership.org
www.northbayleadership.org