

Why do we walk toward danger?

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I am stuck at home in Boston with my wife and dog, wishing I could be there with you to help.

“Why do we walk toward danger?” Treating hundreds of patients afflicted by this high-virulence pathogen is scary. Our contact with it can kill us. And we risk infecting our loved ones at home.

Six years ago when I first joined NYU Grossman, I decided to spend a night in the emergency ward. At three a.m. the man who was emptying the trash was not resentful of this job, but talking and laughing with the doctors and nurses. *Strange*. I soon saw that this “sense of service” starts at the top and permeates down through all of this 40,000-strong institution. I’d never been part of that before. The core, clearly, was not the “self,” but the “service.” Not the “I”, but the “we.” Again, the connection.

And that’s the reason we walk toward danger. And why so many health care workers from all over the USA are volunteering to come help us in New York. Yes, for sure this is part of our job, what we signed up for, our Hippocratic Oath. But a job and a signature and an oath sometimes cannot sustain us, especially when we are under great stress, when we feel that shock in our gut, of fear. We all have felt that shock. I’ve described it in *The House of God*, and *Man’s 4th Best Hospital*.

The antidote?

What brings out our best in horrific times is our connection with each other, our “being with.” The danger mobilizes our shared relationships and focuses our skill. In any of these good connections, we feel more energy, value and understanding of each other, more empowered to act, and a desire to connect again. We come out of these encounters more ready to “do the right thing” for patients, our

team, and our selves. We might have felt that we could not go on for another minute, but then—*in the connecting*—our resilience and energy returns! Good connection makes good care.

Connection comes first. Of course there are always disconnects, but in a crisis it's what we do *next*. Even saying, "We're in a disconnect" is a connecting statement. If we hang in, it can lead to our better connection. And all good connections are mutual.

This is what keeps us going through hard times like these. Simply put, it's a shift to the "We." Working together under this pressure brings forth the "we"—and then the "we" strengthens the connection.