

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Humanity and poetry in medicine

An excerpt from [Self-compassion: cultivating physician resilience during the pandemic](#) by Paul Mohapel, PhD, as published in *The Canadian Society of Physician Leaders COVID-19 Crisis Bulletin #7 (page 2)*

“Common humanity refers to the sense of interconnectedness we feel with others. All humans are flawed works-in-progress, everyone fails, makes mistakes, and experiences hardship in life. Connecting to our common humanity honours the unavoidable fact that life entails suffering for everyone, without exception. When things go wrong or not the way we expected them to go, we often think we are at fault. We forget that this is perfectly normal and natural. In addition, physicians often isolate themselves when they are struggling. Instead of reaching out for support, they will often blame themselves for not being able to cope better with stress. Remembering that pain and failure are part of the shared human experience and normalizing that allows us to feel more connected with others. Tapping into our common humanity is a reminder that there are forces beyond our control. It requires accepting what you can change and having the wisdom to let go of what you cannot change or directly impact. Self-compassion expert Dr. Neff suggests that, when we find ourselves suffering or feeling disconnected from others, we repeat the following phrases to ourselves: ‘We all make mistakes. We all fail. This is part of the human experience. May I be safe, may I be peaceful, may I be kind to myself. May I accept myself as I am.’”



tinnitus by Ted Jablonski (photo credit: wilsan u, unsplash.com)

With gratitude, we share two poems by Ted Jablonski, MD CCFP FCFP

tinnitus

there are days
when the mosquito buzz saw
vibrating through my head
sounds better
than the perpetual drone
of the worried well
that fumble and fidget
in front of me

caught

lean in
eye contact
mute
furrowed brow
head nod
reassurance

deception

a safe
monotonous
consistent
isolated
place

tinnitus

a wall of

unrelenting

noise

I can no longer

climb over

the parasite as hero

I work hard

keep the balance of want and need

to remain alive

comfortable

safe

clinging to the back of a chronic malady that has stripped the body

and mind of its host

my host

who painfully withers away

death means moving on

change that I would rather not have

at this moment

gluttonous

my being has

danced, sung, chased fantasies

visions of grandeur

built a kingdom for my progeny

who flourish

bear fruit

heroic or

opportunistic altruism

symbiotic

or parasitic

the seduction of concession

satiated

I sleep well

dream

often

The Physician and Family Support Program (PFSP) invites original physician poetry submissions

PFSP recognizes the importance of the emotional and social aspects of physicians' lives in their overall wellness. We invite Alberta physicians in any career stage to send in their original poems/prose to be considered for publication in the PFSP Perspectives column in future issues of *Alberta Doctors' Digest*.

- Submissions of under 500 words can be emailed to pfsp@albertadoctors.org. Please write "poetry submission" in the subject field.
- We will acknowledge receipt of your submission. If it is selected for publication, we will work with the *ADD* editor to determine when it can be published.
- For further information or questions, please email pfsp@albertadoctors.org, and one of our team members will get back to you.

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