

numa

caring for the spirit in island health

Maranta Leuconeura

(The following reading is from "Wide Angle Lens" a bimonthly reflection created by SHP Michael Politano-Bowles for the staff at VGH).

Each morning I walk into the sacred space at VGH to see how our few, somewhat feeble plants are holding up or hanging on, in that dimly-lit, north(ish) facing room. The other day, I noticed one stem of the prayer plant, aptly named for its ability to open by day and close at night into prayer hands, was bent at a 90 degree angle. Not broken, but bent. Perhaps tired of praying incessantly, or perhaps succumbing to the burdens of everyday life, it needed botanistic attention. I propped up the stem with chopsticks as delicately as if I were playing Operation, then carried on with my day. I moved through units that seemed short-staffed, tense, overcapacity (read: dimly lit, north(ish) facing). The next day I walked into the sacred space as usual. Out of the very stem that had required propping up, a delightful pale purple flower the size of a fingernail had appeared. Wikipedia, in all its glorious accuracy, notes that flowering is rarely




Every flower blooms
at a different pace.

Suzy Kassem

observed in the Maranta Leuconeura - our starring houseplant. How then, against all odds, in our lovely but cave-like sacred space, could such a phenomenon occur?


I don't like to allegorize too often. Allegorizing is not the act of making alligator boots (as I once believed), but is the act of taking a symbol and stretching it across some actual event in time and space. So, how then, against all odds, in our lovely



Resiliency

Perhaps the butterfly is proof that you can go through a great deal of darkness yet become something beautiful.

Spiritual Health
spiritualhealth@islandhealth.ca



Centering at the Sink

Each day you wash your hands countless times. This is a crucial activity which can easily become mundane. We invite you to consider using these hand hygiene times as opportunities to "center at the sink".

The time spent washing hands our hands is the perfect moment to be still, to focus and steady our minds and our hearts. It is a moment to regulate our breathing and engage in a reflection that can both inspire and settle us.

What you do in those moments can be as unique as you are.

You can:

- Say the words of a song or poem that is meaningful to you
- Recite sacred words of your spiritual or cultural tradition
- Say the names of family members, friends or coworkers, reflecting on what they need in this time.
- Reflect on what you want to "wash away" – fear, anxiety, stress - and what you want to fill its place – calm, courage, love.

Whatever you do consider seeing your hand washing moments as opportunities to check-in with yourself throughout the day. Moments where you can settle your heart, your breathing and find strength for the work that lays ahead.

Spiritual Health
spiritualhealth@viha.ca



Click on the posters above to see full versions.
If you would like one for your unit please contact spiritualhealth@islandhealth.ca

but short-staffed, tense, overcapacity hospital, can such unlikely phenomena exist? You know the ones.

Not long after beholding our flower I was up on one of the units. I heard one patient listening compassionately to another who sobbed while telling their story. I saw one patient making paper flower cut-outs to give to their neighbour. I watched as one nurse comforted another in distress, reminding her of her gifts.

What flowers have you seen blooming out of this crazy time? Which co-staff rising up? Which distressed patient offering their time and kind words? What connection was born out of a hard day's struggle? What minor note rang through a heavy day? When you're recounting your shift to a partner/spouse/friend/family/stranger/journal at the end of the day, don't forget about the rare flower you saw peeking through a dimly lit, north(ish) facing room.

Interested in learning more about Spiritual Health? Consider enrolling in:

["Spiritual Health: Supporting Patient Centered Care"](#)

(LMS Course # 16140)

LearningHub

NUMA (Greek for "spirit/breath") is produced by Island Health's Spiritual Health team to draw awareness to issues of spirituality in health care. The editor of numa is Darren Colyn, Spiritual Health Leader. To learn more about Island Health's Spiritual Health program visit the [Spiritual Health Professional Practice](#) page and to read past issues of NUMA go to the [Spiritual Health public webpage](#).