

Caregiving in the Age of Coronavirus: Taking Care of Your Loved Ones—and Yourself

With

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SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Hey, everybody! I am Soledad O'Brien. Welcome to our special event. It's called "Caregiving in the Age of Coronavirus: Taking Care of Your Loved Ones and Yourself."

Caregiving obviously comes from a place of love, it's beautiful, it's also challenging. It's unheralded. It's vital in this society. Taking care of ourselves is all of those things as well. So according to the AARP, 60% of caregivers are women and today obviously that role has become even more complicated, complex and challenging than ever before.

So how are we handling the social, financial pressures of caregiving during a pandemic? How could we manage better? How can women take care of themselves as they are also taking care of their aging parents and school-aged children? Is it really possible to be all things to all people? We kind of know the answer to that is no, and yet here we are every day trying to be all things to all people.

So for answers we are going to turn to an amazing pair of guests who will share their personal experiences as well as give us very specific advice on how women can navigate the challenges of caregiving in a very extraordinary time period. Lee Woodruff is co-author of The New York Times best-selling book, *In an Instant*. She is also the co-founder of the Bob Woodruff Foundation. It supports injured veterans and their families. You might recall that Lee's husband, Bob Woodruff, suffered a severe brain injury in 2006 while he was covering the war in Iraq for ABC News. Lee, always nice to see you!

LEE WOODRUFF: You as well. Thanks Soledad!

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: You bet. Renée Peterson Trudeau is an internationally recognized life balance coach, speaker and award-winning author of *The Mother's Guide to Self-Renewal* and other books as well. She has coached thousands of women and girls too on how to reclaim, rejuvenate and rebalance their lives. Renée, nice to see you!

RENÉE PETERSON TRUDEAU: Thanks, Soledad! Great to be here!

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Thank you! Okay. So Lee, I am going to start with you. Caregiving is so stressful and so hard and then you layer a pandemic on top of it, and I think for a lot of people the anxiety level is sort of like right here under our chins. Talk to me a little bit about your own experiences in the past and the things that you have learned that you think could be applicable to people today who are going through similar things when it comes to caregiving.

LEE WOODRUFF: Well, Soledad, there is no question that right now we already have started with, as you say, a stress level that's up to our chins. So you add those jobs on that so many women especially just take for granted; taking care of mom, who in my case is in an assisted living facility. So I am unable to see her, touch her, hug her. But I am adding the eight-hour round trip drive just so she can see my face through the glass. So, for many of us having that issue.

My own story with my husband, who is very well-recovered and back on the air as a reporter, was one that happened when I was in my mid-40s. So caregiving, a spouse in the unexpected role is another aspect to all of this. And when I talk to the military spouses that I work with or that we work through the Foundation with or those that are part of the AARP CAREGIVER GROUP, their stress level from having loved ones who currently live with post-traumatic stress or some of the injuries from these wars on top of their inability to form community is really what the stressor is.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Yeah, I would imagine that coronavirus complicates something already. Is there any upside; I hate to even frame it this way, but, for example, I have found one little tiny silver lining in a global pandemic is, I am around my family more. I usually travel as a reporter as well all the time, right, so there is a thread of an upside. For these families that talk to you, do they have anything that they would say that the pandemic has actually had a little bit of a positive impact?

LEE WOODRUFF: I do think there is a silver lining aspect and part of it is the headspace you put yourself in when you wake up in the morning. Easier said than done--absolutely have to

forgive yourself for the bad days or the days when you are just not feeling it. But to try to look at those moments of togetherness as ones that are fleeting. And as we get older, we realize everybody won't always be around.

But every single day, as someone said to me once, can't be Doris Day. So if you don't have that attitude, it's okay to just say, I am going to have a grumpy day today and tell everybody that, which is what I do. I say I sort of woke up on the wrong side of the bed, guys. I love you, but I am just going to own it today. So I am going to need your help. And just by sort of cinching everybody in and making them a part of understanding where you are coming from, then it takes it away from the personal.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: You tried to tee this up well, Lee, for Renée. I think a lot of the stress comes from these competing responsibilities, right? Like everybody can't have their day and sometimes, for a caregiver, *very often* they can't have their day and they can't have their time. You talk a lot, Renée, about balance and slowing down and intentionality and sometimes I think all amazing and yet you have this sometimes slog of dealing with the basics of caregiving that seem to be in competition. How do you juggle those?

RENÉE PETERSON TRUDEAU: Yeah, and let me just give a little context, because yeah, I do talk a lot about slowing down and living intentionally, and I am a type A overachiever, oldest of seven children, used to push myself really hard, like to play big, like many of us, and there's nothing wrong with playing big, but the pace at which I was moving was not sustainable.

So in 2002 I had my son Jonah. Like many of you, I was doing community work and running nonprofits and running my consulting business and traveling and had a baby. And I had no maternal support around me and was really feeling, I had lost my mom, my grandmothers, just had nothing, and felt a calling to gather women and really dive into what does this look like to try to create balance through the art and science of self-care, which I will talk more about. So I started something called a Personal Renewal Group and gathered women to explore how we manage our energy and say no and build a support system and reconnect with who we are.

It was also very revelatory and understanding that as women a lot of us get on this like treadmill of to-do lists, kind of plowing through to-do lists. I had so much stuff tied up around productivity and worthiness that I had to unravel and explore. And I hang out a lot with neuroscientists and psychologists, I am very into mental health, and what we know is that a lot of women are experiencing depression because there's a disconnect from their inner world. So they have got a robust outer world, but a disconnect about from what's going on in here. So these groups and this process for me really helped me begin to get on my path in terms of exploring self-care and bringing it in to my daily life.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: So then Lee, let's start with you. What are some of the things that parents can do to lighten the load as caregivers; maybe we will start with small children first? New York Times had an article talking about education pods, which sounded amazing and extremely expensive. What kind of advice would you give around how to take the burden off yourself, especially when you have got little kids and not college-aged kids like we have?

LEE WOODRUFF: Soledad, I can't imagine right now, my clients, my friends who do have young children, I am not sure how they are doing it, working, trying to be the tutor, because that would have been a big F for me, especially with math.

So I know there are lots of ways to help, but the best advice that I can say is part of what's so hard about being a caregiver is the lack of control. So there are things that are simply out of your control, and I felt when Bob was injured and I was caring for him, my kids were 14, 12, 5 and 5, and so I was the parent for all of them as he was in a coma and recovering. And the little things that I could control and the way that I could set a schedule and make a list and cross things off the list and the kids knew that at X time this is where they were going to be gave not only me a sense of control over something, because I couldn't control when he was going to get better or come out of his coma, but it gave the family a sense of structure.

So I think in the absence of that, that's sort of the big thing, but I think on that list too has to be that me time, because every single woman knows and everybody listening to this knows, we are the last person on our own list and that's okay some days, but there are days when you just have

to say ‘me first.’ And I think that’s the way people are going to get through this fall with home-schooling, because my heart goes out to everyone doing this.

SOLEDAD O’BRIEN: It’s so brutally hard. I have friends who have got 3-year-olds and 6-year-olds and that is a lot. So Renée, let’s do a deeper dive into that and let’s focus right at this moment on the younger kids, people who are helping home-school their kids at this moment or are in some kind of hybrid situation. Lee has talked about she is a list person and kind of like get some structure in there and also have me time. Walk me through like what should be on your list? How do you exactly carve out me time? How do you think about that in an environment where you have got a child who needs to get through third grade too?

RENÉE PETERSON TRUDEAU: Yeah, Soledad and Lee, this is so hard, so hard. I have got four sisters that are doing this right know. We have got facilitators and friends and women in our community that are talking about this. It’s just grueling. It’s really hard. So again, just offering some context. I would encourage moms and dads to first come up and take a 30,000 foot view. So what happens, a lot of us are trying to do business as usual and we are trying to keep our same expectations and we have these completely unrealistic expectations. Lowering expectations is the number one thing I hear from moms around the country that’s helping them.

So having a realistic view of what is possible. Doing a lot of pausing, re-setting. Like Lee said, today is not going well, okay? We’re having oatmeal and fruit for dinner. You know? I mean just really, good is good enough. In fact, my sister-in-law, we have a code word when she is having a hard day. She will call me and I’ll say “scrambled eggs.” And that means breakfast for dinner. I also encourage people -- I like to encourage women to live inside-out. So again, balancing our outer world and inner world. So maybe sitting down if you are in a relationship with your partner and thinking about what are the three values this fall that we want to orient around? Maybe it is creativity, maybe it’s physical fitness or well-being, maybe it’s kindness, you know? But what are the three values our family wants to orient around so we can direct our energy and our activities towards that?

And then I could go on and on but I'll offer one more thing, it's for moms really creating a scaffolding for the fall. So pausing, I recommend doing just taking an afternoon or if you can, a day for yourself if that's possible. Stepping back and really entering this intentionally, thinking about what do I need from a self-care standpoint, physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally to create the architecture or the scaffolding to set me up for success so I can really be resourced and be present for my family?

LEE WOODRUFF: It's one of the things that worked for us when all my kids moved back home when the quarantine happened is, I realized I was doing everything. I'm sure there is no one out there that can relate to this, and I realized like, wait, I had an empty nest. Like what -- you all came back and now my grocery bill has quadrupled and I'm still doing everything. So very early on, I had what I call a mini-freak out and I said, guys, I was your mother for 29 years. I still am your mother, but I'm not your maid. So we're making a matrix/metrics -- and we're signing you all up for dog-walking. Someone gets to go to the grocery store, someone else were doing cooking, dishes. Everybody was part of it, and that's that moment you asked earlier what are we going to look back and see and to Renée's 30,000-foot view, which I love. Those sweet moments that feel like they're sticky at the time are going to be the things that we remember from this time in a good way. Everybody wanted to help, they were all in on that. I don't know why I didn't think of it sooner.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: I remember when I was mopping the floor and my 15-year-old son said something like -- leaned over and said, can you get me the cereal? And I'm like, I might -- it might end badly for this child. But really, and I realized like oh, I have created this. You can sit down and wait, or better, you can mop the floor and get your own cereal. Right? Like we can solve this, and I think sometimes it's about like realizing that you do have to empower your older children, even though they are easier than the little ones in a lot of ways. You do have to empower them like this is a shared responsibility for everybody in this family.

RENÉE PETERSON TRUDEAU: As mothers, we get into that mama bear. Like, let me accommodate, let me make everything safe, let me make everyone comfortable. So just having awareness of that and being gentle with yourself. And I would say, moms, one of the most

powerful things you can do is starting your day intentionally. It is pausing, and in the morning, even taking--so we know when we study the brain--taking as little as five minutes in the morning to think about what am I grateful for? How do I want to be today? On some people, it may be meditation or prayer. Some people, it may be mindful stretching, some people, it may be journaling, have some great little journaling exercises, but starting your day with intention: How do I want to be today rather than let – just falling into the day. It can be really helpful.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Lee, when Bob was injured, I know that there had to be fear around finances, and resources, because the future is so unknown. What were the resources that you realized you could turn to for advice, for guidance, for help, for just information?

LEE WOODRUFF: It's a really pertinent question because I have a piece of advice I'll share at the end of this, but I was terrified, as you know, because you were not just a colleague, journalist colleague, you're also a friend when Bob was injured, and a good friend at that time. Bob had just gotten to the anchor chair at ABC and so our finances had just changed, literally was there eight weeks before he was injured covering the war in Iraq. So it was not like we had all of this nest egg for four children to go to college or any of that. And my first thought was, oh my gosh, we're going to have to have a plan B. Sell the house, I'll go back to work full-time instead of freelancing, we're going to need health insurance. And the scary thing for me and the piece of advice I have for every single person out there listening is to put together what I call the "red file."

And the red file is who is your lawyer, where is your will, who is in charge of your finances, what life insurance do you have? All of those things were scattered around folders and files all around our house. Bob was really the person who dealt with most of it. I wasn't sitting around with no idea what was going on, but I was so happy to have him deal with that stuff. And it took my girlfriends and sisters weeks to construct what our financial picture looked like. And there is just no excuse for that. You need to have one place that you go. And then to the longer point of view, it was getting some good financial advice and advisors, and I can't think of a better reason to be here and be on this panel than to talk about having really solid financial advisors who can

help you figure out what you need to set aside, how to live within a budget. All of those things are so important, and do not save that for a rainy day.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: And Renee, clearly, that's not just great advice for, oh my goodness, there's been a catastrophic injury to somebody in the family. I mean, I think that's great advice if you've got small children or you've got older parents as well. What kind of resources do you advise the people who are reading you and following you to start looking into if they just need some kind of guidance?

RENÉE PETERSON TRUDEAU: Yeah, absolutely, and I echo what Lee says. John and I just did that. We're about to do bicoastal living, two locations and we just went through that process. It was painful, it took forever, but I'm so glad we have it in place. So I really echo that as well.

So I guess my top recommendation would be to really look at building a robust support network. And so you can draw a circle, on a piece of paper, put yourself in the middle, you can do spokes going out from there. So professionally, and personally, what kind of support do you need to feel really nurtured and strong, and resourced in your life? We talked about definitely, yeah, an amazing financial planner, a CPA, it could be a parenting coach. If you have the resources, it could be someone to help you with meals, or household things. Emotional well-being. It could be a therapist, a minister. What kind of support do you need?

Some of this involves lining people up or hiring people and some of this involves just reaching out and being vulnerable and being real with friends or people you know and saying, I need help. Can we walk every Friday morning and share resources around parenting our 17-year-olds? I'm having a hard time. So getting comfortable with asking for and receiving help and building a support system can be life-changing.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: It's been so weird to realize how little we touch other people now, right? I mean, if you're doing it right, you're not hugging anybody who is not in your immediate family, and you know, obviously, for people who you're close to, who you want to hug, you're just afraid of who wants to be the asymptomatic carrier of something that ends up harming

someone that you love. What's the advice you guys would give to people who are trying to figure out? I mean, I find this the weirdest thing about the time that we're in. How do you have a closeness with people who in the morning you would hug or shake their hand or pat on the back? It's just strange now.

LEE WOODRUFF: I think you get real touchy with your pod squad. I think there are a lot more hugs and I think my kids -- the grown kids needed more hugs during this time. I think that I grab the dog whenever I can and tried to just get a few pets from the dog. Dogs will give you unconditional love, but it is extremely hard because we are physical animals. And I think that's the difficulty with communicating in this format. And I -- and I'm hearing this from neurologists and others as well. I'm sure Renée has more to add. We're meant to connect to people in-person to get that energy from them, to see a 360 real body and maybe touch it and have contact. That's all part of our own sort of sense of well-being and self-care. So this is a really hard time right now. So with those people that I am around, I do find myself hugging a little more and I find my kids sort of needing it, sidling up to me, asking for it kind of.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Interesting. Yeah, I went in the other day accidentally. I met somebody and I went in to shake his hand. We're both in masks and we were far apart and he recoiled. And of course I was like, oh my gosh, I'm so sorry -- I don't shake people's hands, but it was a very weird feeling.

What are the other ways, Renée, that you can maintain a closeness maybe with your grandparents, the kids and the grandparents or even people who are better than acquaintances but not living in your household, keep them close without touching them or putting them at any risk?

RENÉE PETERSON TRUDEAU: Yes, such a huge topic, we can talk about this all day, and I'll just add a little context. I just did a media interview last night and we were talking about in the pandemic, what are the key things that really make a difference? And I was sharing, you know, again, I'm all about neuroscience, spending time in nature, you know, daily movement, you know, that move a muscle, change a thought. You might have heard that, being mindful of media intake, and then the fourth one was connection. Connection is our medicine.

So like Lee was saying and like you were saying, Soledad, it is so critical right now for us to have this connection. It's like oxygen. So every morning in our house, we will ask we'll just do a quick circle up. My 18-year-old doesn't want much to do with me. He's ready to leave the nest. But I will ask, what is one thing you're looking forward to today?

So, again, this is kind of based on resiliency research, reorienting our minds. What is one thing you're looking forward to today? You can do a Zoom call. You could reach out to your grandmother or grandfather in that caregiving role. Well, ask them what is one thing you're looking forward to? It can be tonight is fried chicken night, where they live. It can -- whatever, it can be something really small but realizing that connection is integral to our well-being. It's not fluffy. It's really like oxygen.

LEE WOODRUFF: So some of the things that I did for my mom, my dad passed away from Alzheimer's a couple of years ago, so she's truly alone and for a long time not allowed to leave the room. So I would send her a poem every day. I dug up old photographs. Remember, when we got photographs developed? And sent her those and we also sent her a rotating picture frame. We three daughters of hers, loaded 5,000 digital pictures on it so that she could every day since she wasn't allowed to talk so small. And -- but that also did something for me to Renée's point, like I felt like I was keeping that connection with my mom and doing something that would keep her motivated and happy and just the act of giving, as we all know and being able to do that felt fantastic.

RENÉE PETERSON TRUDEAU: I found that the family chat, like we set up a little family texting chat, you know, really, it's a -- it's a place to keep stupid jokes, and pictures of our puppy. And it was actually great to have everybody weigh in on something that was a unifying thing--even though we weren't all together, it felt like we're experiencing something together, even though physically we're not particularly together.

LEE WOODRUFF: We also made a family garden and it was -- it started with just pots on the deck in the early spring where we grew herbs and lettuce and kale and just the act of doing that

and then eating our own food kind of inspired everybody and then we made a bigger pot when summer happened.

And not everyone can do that if you're living in a city, but everyone can grow your own herbs in a pot. There was something, as Renée said about getting outside, putting your hands in dirt, gardening, using your hands. That connection.

RENÉE PETERSON TRUDEAU: I love that. There was a study at UCLA on women and friendship and about how we're wired and what we go into this mode called tend and befriend. That's how we heal. That's how we kind of come into wholeness on our own. So I made it a priority during the pandemic and I still do. I have girlfriends, thank goodness, that will drive to my South Austin neighborhood and walk with me every day. So either in the morning or at night, different friends that will come, and it's fine to move our bodies, and we get a lot of benefit from that. But we solely do this or I do this primarily for that emotional connection, emotional self-care. So when you want to ditch your walk with your girlfriend, please keep it at the top of your to-do-list, because it has an enormous impact on your well-being.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: You mentioned self-care and you've talked a lot about extreme self-care. So I think driving yourself to a friend's house to walk with them is a good example of extreme self-care. Renée, tick off for me some other examples of extreme self-care. And then also, how do you wedge it in there? Like, there is a lot of things I would love to do. I just cannot find the time sometimes.

RENÉE PETERSON TRUDEAU: For women that are thinking, I don't have time, my plate is so full, and I know many are probably in the sandwich generation. Right? So they're caring for parents and caring for their kids.

If you can reorient to the idea that self-care is not about adding something to your to-do-list, it's about cultivating a new way of being with yourself. When we practice self-care physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally, taking the walks and journaling, taking time for that phone call with a friend, taking time in nature. Some people it's meditation and prayer, other people it's

service. In our family, we're doing this Drive a Senior, a national program, because we really want to help others.

But doing those things really resources you and helps you cultivate a stronger state of being. Two things that are up for me right now around self-care that I'm really looking at are around managing my energy, so not my time--a lot of us get very confused about time and energy. I underestimated grossly the amount of energy it was going to take to prepare to send my son off to college this Friday. I underestimated what it was going to take for me emotionally, physically, spiritually, mentally, on top of everything else that's going on. So I wish that I would have been more intentional around that.

The other thing that's come up for me a lot is on Sunday night we had a going away dinner for my son and it was a beautiful dinner. But at the very end, I kind of got into an uncomfortable discussion or argument with a family member, came home, woke up the next morning just feeling the heaviness of that and I didn't feel like walking, I didn't feel like meditating, I didn't feel like journaling, but I checked in and I knew that if I made myself do this and really call and harness on that discipline, that it would put me in a state of being that was not only felt better for myself and help my day flow, but would enormously impact everyone around me. So this idea that self-care really helps us rock our game, you know, it's not fluffy, it's not a manicure or pedicure. It really helps us rock our game.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: And I love that you describe it as it's not more to do on your list. It's actually a viewpoint around your list. I think that's important. You, Lee, have wrote an entire book called '*Perfectly Imperfect*', which is kind of the viewpoint, I think, for a lot of people who go into caregiving. Why that title? I mean, obviously, you are sending a message with this strategy around what life had suddenly handed you.

LEE WOODRUFF: So there's this mythical bar for us that we're supposed to be able to do it all. So that's an automatic set up for fail because you're never going to get through it all. So the notion of being perfectly imperfect and embracing that to me was just giving ourselves permission to have those bad days. And when I think about self-care, and it was impossible in

those days when Bob was living in the hospital and I had the young kids and still was trying to work in some form. My self-care might have been as small an item literally as going upstairs and cutting and filing my nails for the day. Like that was self-care. That was ten minutes to do something that have been bugging me or that walk-and-talk.

So I would get outside, and that to me is so important. For me, it's going out in nature. But I call somebody and say, will you walk with me? So, it's Renée's South Austin neighborhood but without the proximity. So I'd pick a girlfriend I hadn't talked to in a while and we go for a walk and I'd have my cellphone and just talk to her, and those are -- there's this whole concept of respite care which just sounds so enormous and it sounds like you failed as a caregiver because now we need to send you off to the spa or go take a break. And I think that's another reason for women to judge themselves and feel like they've fallen short. So if you can embrace that we're all perfectly imperfect and accept that, you're in a much better head space to deal with all the many things you have to care for.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: How do you guys think about financial balance? Because I have to imagine when you're a caregiver, and certainly this happened with my elderly parents. Suddenly, you start putting all your resources over there and you start skimping on the things over here. Is there a financial balance? Is it just you got to get through it? How does it work for you guys? Renée, why don't you start?

RENÉE PETERSON TRUDEAU: Sure. So again, I keep coming back to that pausing and taking the 30,000-foot view, which I do a lot. Every 90 days, I take a planning retreat where I kind of come up and look at my life and see what's calling for my energy and my talents and my time and I think this ties into financial planning, absolutely. So doing this for yourself whether it's half-day or one-day planning retreat or visioning, sharing this with your financial planner, but I really define balance in a larger context is having enough time, energy and resources for that which matters most. At that moment, at that life stage, at that particular moment and then orienting your energy and your resources towards that thing whatever it may be. Maybe it is working with a kid who is having a hard time. Maybe it is caring for a parent who has Alzheimers. Maybe it is -- but there is widespread employment right now. Maybe it's a career

transition, but looking at balance from that bigger standpoint and then financial balance being a piece of that and reaching out for help, getting that support from -- we talked about the financial planners, the CPAs, et cetera.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: How about for you, Lee, especially considering that your caregiving role came overnight? From one minute, you were not a caregiver and then suddenly you were a caregiver dealing with four children, small children and a health catastrophe? How do you think about financial balance? How should people be thinking about how to potentially deal with something that's coming down the pipe but they can't even imagine at this moment?

LEE WOODRUFF: My -- so my take on that was so different, Renée from yours, doing that sort of looking at things in chunks. All I wanted to know was that we would be okay at the very end. So here I was, we had -- we didn't have a nest egg, a nice nest egg that would take care of me for the rest of my life. So it was so critical in that moment in time to sit down with what I needed for my own sense of self and calm was to sit down with our financial advisor and say give me the worst case scenario financial planning. I want to know how much do we have to put away each year, how much do we need life insurance? I don't ever want this to happen again. If it does, God forbid, I want to be so prepared and I got so much of my ability to sleep at night knowing, okay I've got this. I know what our plan is. I know that I -- I needed to know that I could take care of them all. I needed to know that absent Bob that my kids wouldn't suffer financially. They were never going to be flying around in their own private jets. That's for sure, but I wanted them to be able to go to college and I wanted them to be able to handle any health emergencies that might happen.

And when the financial advisor was able to walk me through that and help me have my hands on the lever of how much risk I wanted in terms of stocks and bonds and anything else in a portfolio, I could roll over and go to bed at night. I needed that long-term view that if anything bad ever happened that we could be safe.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: A final question for both of you is around what advice you would give someone for dealing with what I've -- it's just a crazy time. Like if a girlfriend called you up and

said I'm just struggling and it's not one thing. It's kind of everything, right? The job market is uncertain. I have a job at this moment but tomorrow, I might not. And my kid has gone off to school but tomorrow could be coming back. And this one here, their school was open but tomorrow, that could change. And I'm feeling stressed and anxious. I can't tell you exactly about why but everything is stressing me out. What would be the advice that you would give that person? Lee, why don't you start off?

LEE WOODRUFF: I love this question, because I have gotten this question. I have also been the person who's called somebody and said, "What! Help me! I have two things that I'd say to people. One is walk outside right now, look at the sky, just look up. Look at how beautiful and big this world is. Look at the fact that you've just got through the last hour. Did you get through the last hour? Pat yourself on the back. You went from nine to ten o'clock and you're still standing and you're still here.

And the best piece of advice I ever got was from a psychiatrist who -- I crashed later so I was up, up, up, up with the adrenaline taking care of everyone after Bob's injury and then once he sort of got to safety and was doing rehab and doing better, I crashed. I went on antidepressants. I just was able to finally -- I had gotten this woman to shore and now the lifeguard collapsed and that's pretty textbook, as I'm sure Renée can tell us. And so I began to talk to somebody about grief and complicated grief and that loss that is different than death. You have lost certain things in someone but they're still there.

And how it's a really wonderful process and a painful process, and at the end of the day I said to him, how do I stop waking up at 3:30 in the morning anxious and just ready to jump out of my skin? And he said, tell you -- ask yourselves these questions and it's really based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs and I know that not everybody can answer these in this way, but I was lucky enough to be able to do that. Are you loved? Yes. Do you have people that you love? Absolutely. Do you have a roof over your head? Yes, I do. Do you have enough to eat? Yes, I do. Have you always been able to figure out how to get those things? Yes, I have. Well then, roll over and go back to sleep, because things always look better in the morning, and I can't tell you how many times I have ticked through that mental list in the middle of the night, and I know that we're

entering an anxious time where not everybody is going to have a place to live or maybe enough food to eat, so I say that with mitigating factors, but I feel like we are -- people are resilient. The human spirit is resilient, and if you form that community that we've all talked about, you have that one person that those ten people that you can unburden it with. Just hold on for a minute and it will get better. When it's bad, it always somehow gets a little better.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: And very rarely does being stressed and not sleeping -- it doesn't really help. It almost never helps the situation the more you're freaking out no matter what the circumstances are.

Renée, I'm going to give you the final word, if I may. What advice would you give? How would you advise someone who calls you up and says, I'm stressed?

RENÉE PETERSON TRUDEAU: Yeah, and let me just echo, Lee, I love what you said so much on so many levels and there is a lot of science and actually when people are battling depression to walk outside and look up, and we actually know that it has a cognitive and neurobiological effect of looking up when we feel down. So thank you, that was such a beautiful reminder!

So I would offer up, if I was speaking to you as a girlfriend, the reminder that self-care is not about self-indulgence, it's about self-preservation. And if you were to do nothing else during this time, as you move through your day and when you feel that impulse that you should be more, you should be doing more, to pause, put a hand on your heart, and there is a lot of science behind this; and simply ask, what do I need, what do I need? And this can feel super weird, but I do this throughout the day, throughout the day, just pausing, checking in, what do I need, and the more you do it, the more comfortable you become. So being open to this idea of as you move through your day doing these check-ins and asking what do I need and knowing that as I resource myself and I focus on self-care, everyone around me is going to benefit.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Those are great thoughts to close on. A big thank you to our panelists and of course thank you to you as well for watching. I hope you have gotten as much from this program as I have from Lee and from Renée.

We hope that you have enjoyed this conversation and that you have taken away some really specific and useful insights and inspiration as you navigate the road ahead. So stay safe and again, thanks for watching!

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