

From coughs to COVID-19: various symptoms can be signs of the virus or illness from tobacco use

Written in stone: UMMC to commemorate pandemic experience

By Gary Pettus
UMMC

About 200 ornamental stones cover the altar table in the chapel of the University of Mississippi Medical Center – one for every patient lost to COVID-19.

There is hardly room for more stones on the table's surface; soon, when more are added, they'll have to be stacked.

While the display is a reminder of the pandemic's disturbing toll, it's also an acknowledgement of the dignity and worth of each patient.

"Each stone is unique," said Chaplain Doris Whitaker, director of pastoral services at UMMC. "Just as no life is identical to another life."

Starting at noon Thursday, those lives will be remembered during a virtual memorial ceremony staged in the University Hospital Chapel: "Through Shadow and Light, Reflections on Our COVID-19 Journey."

UMMC employees and students are invited to join the live-streamed event, at umc.edu/COVID-reflections, which will be recorded and made available after the fact. It promises to be a celebration as much as a remembrance, a chance to give thanks for the 1,500 or so patients UMMC providers have restored to their lives and families, and to connect with those families as well.

And it's an occasion to honor the Medical Center staff, especially the front-line caregivers who have met the challenges of the pandemic with courage and grace.

"It's a time to catch our breath," said Dr. Joshua Mann, professor and chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine, one of the opening speakers, along with Whitaker and Dr. LouAnn Woodward, vice chancellor for health affairs and dean of the School of Medicine.

"We're hoping that as we reflect on everything that's happened over the past several months, we will realize

chant for hitting is indication of where things are going; that is, steadily worse. The standard length of a newspaper column requires that I come straight to the point: your husband's response, as well-intentioned as it may be, is enabling your son's misbehavior. First, a child this age, especially one who has



Stones memorializing UMMC's COVID-19 patients cover most of the surface of the altar table in the University Hospital Chapel. (Photo by UMMC)

how much we've accomplished and maybe take a little time to process the grief we have for the people lost to the infection," said Mann, who is also director of the Office of Well-being

It's an opportunity to focus on "the important role we have to help each other get through this trying time," said Mann, who evoked the experience of Dr. Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist and World War II concentration camp survivor.

"As he observed his fellow prisoners, Dr. Frankl came to believe that those who were better able to cope with the horrors of the camps had a stronger appreciation for what made their lives meaningful."

At UMMC, it was Dr. Michael Stefanek who first proposed a COVID-19 memorial.

"That was a few months ago, when we thought the pandemic wouldn't last this long," said Stefanek, professor of psychiatry and human behavior, professor of population health science, and associate director of the Cancer Control, Epidemiology and Disparities Program of the UMMC Cancer Center and Research Institute.

"We thought the virus

might be past us by mid-summer and the deaths would be behind us; unfortunately, that hasn't happened. It became clear after time that we don't have an end in sight.

"One of the things I was struck by, even at the beginning, was how anonymous it all was. With tragedies such as plane crashes, you often see faces and stories in the news, but with the continuing death tolls each day from the virus, all we had were these numbers.

"Then add to that the process of dying from COVID: You often don't have your family with you; your loved ones aren't there. So having an observance is a way for us to express our sorrow and our resolve to remember the people we have lost, and to do so beyond this one memorial service.

"My hope is it's going to be an ongoing way to remember."

Using stones to remember the patients was Hospital Chaplain Linda McComb's idea, Whitaker said.

"We may not know each person's name, but it's important to mark the life that was here," she said.

Marking the lives of Medical Center patients who have

died is a bittersweet gesture familiar to Dr. Keith Mansel, professor of medicine, and director of palliative and support care services at UMMC.

"Every Friday morning, our palliative care team has a time of bereavement and remembrance, often with other caregivers who have worked with the patients," said Mansel, one of the memorial event speakers.

"We use stories and narratives about the patients we have lost. We give people the space to talk about their emotions; I'm amazed at how healing that can be, the healing power of stories.

"This memorial observance can also help us deal with our own grief and sadness, because we've all continued to grieve over the past six months.

"The isolation from loved ones who are critically ill has been particularly challenging and burdensome for patients, families, and health care professionals. Yet, through all the suffering, I am encouraged by the strength and perseverance of the human spirit.

"Almost to the person, we have been greeted with graciousness, kindness, and gratitude, for which I am deeply thankful."

strikes. Strike one results in confinement to his room, which you strip of any "entertainment value," for thirty minutes. Strike two, an hour. Strike three, the rest of the day and early bedtime (as in, immediately after the evening meal).

Enforce the plan without reminders, warnings, or second chances and you should be over the aforementioned "hump" within four to six weeks. At that point, it's simply a matter of staying the course.

Family psychologist John Rosemond: johnrosemond.com, parentguru.com.

"Your son's current penchant for hitting is indication of where things are going; that is, steadily worse."

-John Rosemond

Press Release
When someone coughs in public it is no longer perceived as just a bystander with a dry throat, asthma or a smoker choking on a cigarette. A cough in 2020 could mean millions of tiny COVID-19 contaminated particles floating into the air and then falling on you or a surface that you touch, causing you to become ill or possibly die.

A cough has also been a simple sign that more serious health issues may soon follow. This is true for both smokers and those that have COVID-19. Smoking leads to disease and disability and harms nearly every organ of the body. Couple that with COVID-19 and the chances of becoming ill or dying increase significantly.

"The COVID-19 pandemic represents the greatest medical and public health challenge in decades," said Amy Winter, Director of the Office of Tobacco Control for the Mississippi State Department of Health. "Scientists are still learning about the disease, but we know that smoking weakens the immune system, which makes it harder for your body to fight disease. If you continue to smoke, you also have a greater risk for respiratory infections."

More than 16 million Americans are living with a disease caused by smoking. For every person who dies because of smoking, at least 30 people live with a serious

smoking-related illness.


Smoking causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung diseases, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

Smoking also increases risk for tuberculosis, certain eye diseases, and problems of the immune system, including rheumatoid arthritis. And for those with heart or lung disease caused by smoking, you may be at higher risk of having severe illness from COVID-19.

"Tobacco use remains the number one cause of preventable disease and death in the U.S.," said Sharon Nettles Director of the Mississippi Tobacco-Free Coalition of Madison, Yazoo, and Holmes Counties. "Tobacco kills more than 480,000 people per year and sadly that's still more than COVID-19. You have to protect yourself from COVID-19, but if you need help quitting smoking, we have free tools."

For more information and resources about the dangers of e-cigarettes or tobacco products, visit www.healthmys.com/tobacco. For help with quitting visit www.quitlinems.com, or call the Mississippi Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

**Sharon Nettles is the program director for the Mississippi Tobacco Free Coalition in Madison, Yazoo and Holmes Counties. She can be emailed at: sharon.nettles@healthy-miss.org.*



Living With Children

By John Rosemond
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Q: My husband and I are not on the same page when it comes to our just-turned four-year-old son. He thinks our son's behavior is a phase that he will outgrow. To me, his defiance and tantrums are alarming and need to be dealt with now to prevent them from getting worse. Most recently, he has started hitting and kicking us when he doesn't get his way. My husband responds by talking and compromising. Ugh! What is your take on this?

A: When a young child discovers that his parents are not in agreement concerning his discipline, it's Katie-bar-the-door, and make no mistake, a child can and will figure this out as early as age two. Furthermore, it is largely myth that children "outgrow" behavior problems. More often than not, they grow into them, meaning the behavior

problems in question worsen and proliferate over time.

Quite frankly, your son's behavior is bad enough as it is. Some lingering stubbornness in response to instructions is to be expected (albeit not tolerated) at this age, but full-blown defiance and tantrums are indication, clearly, that you folks failed to get over the "hump" of toddlerhood. You're stuck on its upslope and you're going to remain stuck there until you both come to grips with the potential seriousness of your family situation. This is the sort of scenario that eventually leads to a bogus (i.e. unscientific) psychological diagnosis like attention deficit or oppositional-defiant disorder and a prescription for a medication that can cause more problems than it solves (if it solves any).

Your son's current pen-

discovered that he holds the trump card, cannot be reasoned with. Second, if you give a domestic terrorist an inch, as in attempting to compromise with him, he will eventually take the proverbial mile.

Get it together, dad! You are rapidly falling into the trap of valuing your relationship with your son

over your relationship with your wife. Job One is to be a good husband which, in this case, means letting your son know that his respect and obedience is not an option. Stop talking and appeasing and act! Wear big-boy pants! Man up, dude! (The preceding message is intended for many contemporary fathers, by the way.)

The good news is that a solution can still be brought about rather simply: On any given day, your son gets three "strikes." Failure to immediately obey is a strike. The first hint of a tantrum is a strike. Hitting is three