

With all the concerns surrounding the Covid-19, I wanted to approach this a bit differently based on a quote I read from NY Governor Andrew Cuomo about being frightened.

I'll get to that in a second, but as a medical doctor, I felt obligated to encourage you to do the obvious with this situation:

Don't panic and...

Wash your hands (like you ate crawfish in New Orleans and you need to take your contacts out).

Sorry, couldn't resist the chance to share my memories of Hot Sauce'd and Spiced Creole Food from the Big Easy!

My patients tend to be the more intelligent ones in the population (I mean, look at the doctor they chose obviously) so I will NOT reiterate the same statements everybody else is making.

Of course we keep our office clean. We are a medical practice. We will continue this... and not just because COVID-19.

Of course our patients, staff and families health is important to us. That is why we are in the business we are in. A confident person is a healthy person and we help with that. The good news is that the majority of people who come into the office(patients and staff) are physically very healthy. We plan to continue to support this. I believe MCPS patients have common sense and will not come to an appointment if they are not well. We've always had a very lenient policy to accommodate scheduling challenges and have also offered virtual consults. Nothing changes.

And of course, we've all been taught to cough into our elbow, and stay home if we feel sick. We've all gone through Kindergarten. Again... fully supported at MCPS.

OK, enough of the public service announcement.

Here's the quote I promised you from Andrew Cuomo, NY Gov.:

There is no cause for surprise — this was expected. As I said from the beginning, it was a matter of when, not if, there would be a positive case of novel coronavirus in New York.

*We're dealing with a Coronavirus epidemic. We have a bigger problem, which is a **fear pandemic**. And the anxiety here is outpacing the reality of the situation. Now, why do people get frightened in general? People get frightened when one of two things happen. Either I'm not receiving information or I don't trust the information I'm receiving, or the information is very frightening. In this case, the information is not very frightening, the facts are not very frightening.*

There is no reason for undue anxiety — the general risk remains low in New York. We are diligently managing this situation and will continue to provide information as it becomes available.

His take on why people become frightened is what I found most interesting.

Not receiving information: I never liked this. I want to be informed and I want my patients to be informed. That is why at MCPS we have the most extensive, most comprehensive consultation process in Nashville. I believe knowledge is power and I want to ensure my patients are empowered to make the best decision for themselves.

I don't trust the information: if the source cannot be trusted, any information from that source will easily be discredited. My daughter knows when I tell her there are no monsters in her dark room, that I am telling the truth. She trusts me based on her experiences with me as her father. Sometimes she likes to verify this with her mom, as additional proof that I can be trusted. This is also called social proof. Similarly, our patients trust us when we tell them any pain will be short lived, their scars will fade, swelling will resolve. Often they will verify this by seeing others' enthusiastic testimonials (social proof) about their experience at Music City Plastic Surgery. If the information conveyed is not trusted, anxiety about the situation exponentially intensifies.

The information received is frightening: Sometimes leaders must give people information that will scare or upset them. In these cases, leaders must be factual and empathetic, and explain the why behind the information. In Governor Cuomo's case, he explained that New York did not have enough kits to test everyone, so they were working with doctors to prioritize people who were at the highest risk or showed obvious symptoms. It was a clear answer people could understand.

I find delivering honest factual information, even if scary, is best.

I don't like negative surprises or sugary hyperbole about how great things will be. If it's gonna be bad, I'd rather know it up front. If something will be painful, annoying, irritating, require down time, etc. I'd like to know ahead of time. Then I can mentally prepare for it, evaluate my options and then handle it. I try to treat my patients in a similar manner.

While some request less information than others, I've found this approach seems to work best.

We are facing some potentially frightening times ahead. However, I don't believe this is a time to panic. At Music City Plastic Surgery, we are operating as business as usual, and are performing surgery, injections and aesthetic treatments as planned. I encourage all of us to not allow our *looks* to be added to the list of things that are frightening.

Be well,

Dr. Mike Burgdorf