

Moving on in a changed world

In the wake of the attacks on New York and Washington, I've been asking my patients for their thoughts on the tragic events. Each person responds slightly differently; some put it into personal terms, some more global, but all express a form of the same answer. They feel that their lives have been and will continue to be changed by these events.

From a personal standpoint, as a baby boomer growing up in the US, I have had a good life. I was able to pick up on the spur of the moment, hop on an airplane to visit my sons or to take a vacation without a thought of harm from outside forces. But not now. Today the airport contains more security personnel than passengers and the mood seems somber. Traveling is not and may never again be so easy going. Like my patients say, things have changed. This is just one example.

Another change, however, one more uplifting, more promising, is occurring in the minds of people. A determination quietly grows, and it is seen through the placement of flags here and there, slight gestures or nods of the heads of passersby, more acts of civility and examples of compassion in the big city. We are coming together, finding strength in each other.

This mindset has been reflected in my patients in many ways, but the theme I hear most involves a reorientation to those things most important: family, health,

quality of life, and caring for others. I have not seen panic. Few patients have cancelled appointments, and few have postponed therapy; in fact many have called to schedule long-delayed treatment. They are persevering. Personally, I've received many calls, e-mails, and notes from friends around the world, expressing concern. *What a horrible thing*, they say. *Are you all right?*

In short, the events of 9/11/01 have affected all of us in the global community, setting us on a new course, a course largely uncharted. Yet I believe that from the ashes we will build better lives, a better nation, a better world, though the process will be long and difficult.

If the initial responses of my family, friends and patients are any indication, these tragic events are making us take stock. We have the opportunity to reevaluate what is important, and to take steps to change our lives and those of others in positive ways.



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