



Webinar 3
STRESS WITHIN MANAGEMENT IN COVID-19 TIMES
Anton Grech

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Rediscovering what matters

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen!

This is the third time I am welcoming you in these extraordinary times. Again I have to thank you all for participating in this webinar, those that have registered and those who are following us on Facetime. The Covid-19 pandemic has wrought havoc in the businesses of our islands but we must see this pandemic as an opportunity rather than the disaster it is. Positivity should be the rule of the day.

We will soon be welcoming Dr Anton Grech who will be leading us into this webinar by showing us how to deal with the stress that inevitably is attached to our leadership roles in these difficult times. You will have heard the saying “It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness”. This is what has motivated us as the Gozo Business Chamber to hold this webinar which has been so well received by our members and friends. It is our small contribution, that of giving a helping hand, by lighting a candle in the darkness.

We have tried to sustain our members by lobbying in favour of economic help, by lobbying for the availability of liquidity, we are lobbying for new schemes that will aid business in post-covid times, but we cannot forget that beyond leading businesses, our members are also men and women that can feel frail, can be weak, in front of navigating the uncharted waters that this pandemic has brought about.

I have called these few words of my introductory message, “*Rediscovering what matters*” because I feel that a very positive silver lining of this pandemic has been the return to basics, going back to what really matters. When one is profoundly shaken, when one is severely tried, when one charts the unknown and this pandemic has really had these stressful effects, one turns back to the known, to the persons you know, to the community you know, to the environment you can rely on.

I have already stated at the start of other webinars that never have we at the Chamber been so much in constant contact with our members. We have rediscovered that we need each other; we need first and foremost to be nearer to our family but not only;

we also need to reach out to our friends. There is nothing like the strength that one can receive from one's own family members, who we have been near like never before but I have also received solace from friends calling me, asking how I am faring, how my business is doing, whether I needed help. Speaking to them has helped me confront this new reality. I have also had friends calling me, telling me, please phone or make contact with so and so because he needs help, because he cannot cope with the situation. And speaking to these friends has brought comfort not only to the persons I reached-out to, but also had the same soothing effect on me. In the end this is what friendship is all about as the learned Cicero once wrote in his dialogue on friendship, *Laelius de Amicitia*, "We are kindhearted because it is the right and natural thing to do, not because we are hoping for something in return. The reward of friendship is friendship itself...For nothing brings friends more joy than returning kindness and helping each other".¹

From the friendship between the closed family and other individual friendships we have also rediscovered the values of support and solidarity in the community. The pandemic has shown that both on the medical front and on the economic front the battle cannot be fought alone. Being alone causes stress, being together and being united destroys the pressure and strain. "We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disorientated, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other".² This statement by Pope Francis at the peak of the Covid experience reflects the solidarity needed to win the battle against the pandemic and to chart a way forward post-covid. "This solidarity must continue. We can only defeat this virus if we take responsibility for each other",³ stressed President of the European Commission Ursula van der Leyen on Europe Day. In the end it is a reality where we seek the common good above all else.

During this pandemic, many of us have rediscovered the nature around us, the environment that surrounds us. We have had more time to walk around our silent streets, our beautiful countryside, our unspoilt fields. But it has also helped us reflect on the fact, as Pope Francis stated on the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, last April 22, that "We have failed to care for the earth, our garden-home;...we have polluted and despoiled it, endangering our very lives".⁴ In these moments of stress we turned and

¹ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, translated with an introduction by Philip Freeman, Princeton University Press 2018, 63 and 93

² Pope Francis, *Urbi et Orbi, Why are you afraid? Address during the Extraordinary Moment of Prayer*, St Peter's Rome, 27 March 2020 in *Life after the Pandemic*, with preface by Card. Michael Czerny, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2020, 17

³ European Commission, *Van der Leyen on Europe Day: What does Europe mean to me and why is solidarity more valid than ever*, Brussels 9 May 2020 in https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/AC_20_844

⁴ Pope Francis, *Overcoming Global Challenges. Wednesday Catechesis on the Occasion of the 50th Earth Day*, 22 April 2020 in *Life after the Pandemic*, with preface by Card. Michael Czerny, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2020, 58

are turning to the earth as a source of refuge, but this has also taught us that we need to restore a harmonious relationship with it. In fact we as a Chamber are sustaining that our post-Covid restart has to incorporate the protection of the environment around us, with an “Integrated sustainability (that) promotes the synergies among energy and water, energy and mobility, water-energy nexus and agriculture, waste and energy, green economy and sustainable tourism”.⁵

I sustain that “*Rediscovering what matters*”, be it family, friends and friendship, the sustainment and solidarity in the community we make part of, and the environment that surrounds us, is the start towards the gradual elimination of a stressful life which all of us are wary of. I wish us all that we may manage to reorder our life, get our life back on track so that what matters most really takes precedence above everything and anything else.

I thank CEO Daniel Borg and Richard Grech for the organization of this webinar, Bank of Valletta for their support, and obviously Dr Anton Grech for his encouragement in this initiative and his participation as the main speaker. Now I leave everything in your hand Dr Grech...thank you all for being with us this afternoon.

⁵ Gozo Business Chamber, *Post-COVID-19 – Strategic and Policy Document*, Gozo 4 May 2020, 10