Amid shutdowns, the message from the top

Company leaders say decisive action, reassurance guide their response

By Jon chesta and Shirley leung

globe staff

The public health emergency that is COVID-19 is testing the mettle not only of political leaders but also the heads of organizations big and small. The financial decisions are urgent and pressing. Managing people, though, has emerged as a paramount concern as the stressors from working from home and the fear of illness threaten to overwhelm everyone. Nurturing and recovering from the pandemic will leave an indelible mark on how we live and work. Here are some of the biggest lessons learned so far from leaders of local companies and institutions:

“We’re scared. Business is business. Our health is more important.”

—Elliot Tishelman, Jordan’s Furniture

Virus hits pay of doctors, medical staff

Facing shortfalls, some hospitals, health providers making cutbacks

By Rebecca osterkier

globe staff

Emergency room doctors at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center have been told of their accruing pay being held back. More than 1,100 Atrius Health physicians and staffs are facing reduced paychecks or unpaid furloughs, while pay raises for medical staff at South Shore Health, set for April, are being delayed. Three financial cutbacks, coming in response to sudden shortfalls during the coronavirus outbreak, have triggered an outcry from doctors and nurses who are already working growing shifts on demanding working conditions, including the risk of infection from patients who are critically ill with COVID-19.

“This is a time when many of us have moved out to live like lepers separate from family to prevent spreading infection, and here already we are seeing huge extra hours trying to scrape together [personal protective equipment] and otherwise brace for COVID-19,” said Dr. Matt Bivens, an ER doctor at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

DAYS IN OUR LIVES

Virus makes victims of our dreams, hopes, even our compassion

By evan allen

globe staff

Dr. Arthur Kleinman felt the first shiver of worry in December, when the pandemic was still just a mystery. Fearing an explosion of coronavirus cases in China.

"Can we avoid the Big One?" he had written 15 years earlier in the introduction to his book, "SARS in China: Prelude to Pandemic?" When it took just one month for the new coronavirus to show up in Washington state, the Harvard professor of psychiatry and medical anthropology had his answer. By late February, as the residents of a Seattle nursing home began dying and the TV news flashed with more cases around the world, Kleinman closed himself inside his Cambridge home, and retreated into the rituals that had saved him and transformed him years before.

At 79, Kleinman knows pandemics because he has studied deadly infectious diseases. But he knows how to find the right prescription.

Inside straight


PHOTO BY JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Father Richard Flaherty peered through the door of St. Anthony Shrine in downtown Boston.

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A STATE OF EMERGENCY

Mass. residents are frightened but resolved

Mike Kyle, a 32-year-old contractor from Pepperell, lived in fear that recent weeks, when he started building a fever and his asthma became inflamed. On Monday, he was able to get tested for coronavirus 45 minutes away in Haverhill, where a physician took “a thin little, tuned [two] of them. I gave my nasal cavity up in your nose,” he said.

He then spent the next three days held up in a room away from his family. “Not being able to go upstairs and kiss my wife, hold my daughter, change dia-

pers — that was the hardest part,” he said.

He struggled to scrape himself while he waited for the re-
sults. “I'm singing one guitar, I tuned [two] of them. I gave my self a hairstyle, I started doing my model. I kind everything.”

Come Thursday, he got his “God isn't results negative. He plans to return to work Monday.

And while people are most concerned about the health of their families, for many, the pandemic also has sparked fi-
nancial anxiety. The poll found that 63 percent of people are “very concerned” or “somewhat concerned” about their person-

al financial situation or employ-
ment, and 36 percent of those who health crisis already has dimin-
ished their savings.

Lisa Kennedy of Chelmsford, a 54-year-old high school physics teacher, wishes he could have more waiting for something to happen. "I've lived it in my nose. "They put it past you, your nasal cavity up in your nose," she said.

"I can't panic. I will do what I can, " she said. Kennedy said she's 14 years into recovery from addiction, an experience that has helped her navigate the country’s new reality. "I've lived a life of isolation when I was in active addiction. It feels like that: isolated, al-
most waiting for something to come get you," she said. "Be-
cause I lived so many years like that, I get that. I can feel the
ing of stepping out of Massachu-
setts out of fear of not being able to get in."

While some respondents said they must go to the gym or eating out. 49 percent said they miss seeing family members or friends in person and the usual activities, though frequent calls from his two adult sons help, as do his regu-
lar AA meetings, which have moved to Zoom. He is thankful for the kind neighbors whose young children he can see zipping around on their bikes when he goes for walks. The hardest thing, he said, was the shutting of the re-
nier centers, which played a

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A STATE OF EMERGENCY

Eight in 10 approved of how they have been strict about ob-

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ections who say they are emotionally enduring at least a few more months of the current situation.

The thing that surprised me was how long people are willing to stick it out," said Melody. "I was doing Zumba three times a week, and I was just love-

ing it. But I feel like I'm afraid to go out.

I'm afraid of stepping out of Massachusetts out of fear of not being able to go in."

Weekly poll: How strict have you been about social distancing? Not at all or a few percent 4% A little 14% A few more 8% Fairly strict 33% Absolutely 59%

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