

# The Heat is On

Category: Heat

written by Pamela Adelstein | August 24, 2023

During a busy clinic, my eighteen-year-old texted concerns of sudden torrential rains causing flash flooding in our yard, with potential basement flooding. Centuries ago, our backyard was swampland. Now it is developed land and a flood plain.

As a child, if I needed to reach my parents while they were at work as teachers, I dialed the main office of their school. Someone would then call their classrooms and physically cover their classes so they could take the call from the main office. I can count on one hand the number of times I phoned them.

In contrast, today we all can be reached anytime. Even on days fully booked with patients, a new provider onboarding, worry about whether a hospitalized family member was okay, we are fully accessible to all with the pressing of a few buttons..

During that packed clinic day our family chat blew up my phone. I tried to subtly peek at the messages without appearing rude to the patient. I couldn't ignore the photo of the rising water in our backyard. I excused myself to answer some texts and share information about folks who could help. When my child called, I handed the phone to the new provider, asking him to take a message: indeed, the basement was flooding. All the input was fraying my nerves. I needed to breathe and take one thing at a time.

Fortunately, my patients were understanding. Usually, they are. But I still needed to make it through my clinic day. To hydrate and eat a few bites of lunch. To attend my noontime meeting. To answer messages and skim my inbox.

When there are urgent family matters when I am working, nothing gets accomplished to my satisfaction. Distracted, I may rush my patients. And stressed, I may lack empathy with my family.

A wise person in my life once said, "When a provider has a family, patients need to know that the provider's family is somehow in the room, especially in emergencies." I try to remember this and give myself grace when home and family demands push themselves into my workday.

The flash floods were a downstream effect of global warming and climate change.

On chaotic workdays, I also feel the heat. The kindling is gathered, and I am one text, need, question or crisis away from that spark causing everything to go up in flames.

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