

Work in the World: Professional Development for the "Next Normal"

by **Brian Hutchison, Ph.D., CCCE, ACF21**

Professor Laarni T. Capinding is an advocate of mental health, overall well-being, and career development across developmental stages. When not working as an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Tarlac State University in The Philippines, she can be found expressing herself through a range of hobbies including calligraphy, watercolor painting, graphic design, and singing.

As an extrovert, social uncertainty during the pandemic hit Laarni hard at first. Professional development became one of her coping mechanisms used to weather extended periods of lockdown. "We need it now more than ever to adapt to our current situation, embrace the uncertainty of the future together, and find ways to make things work," she explained. She offers the following insights:

- **Access to professional development is greatly enhanced.** The virtual environment expands opportunities in two ways. First, it alleviates financial restrictions for the conferences we might have wished to attend or only were able to occasionally attend. This deepens our connections to our existing network of colleagues as well as the current information and research we use in our work.
- **Professional development topics are greatly expanded.** Virtual professional development allows us to explore topics and/or fields of study that we have never explored before. For example, "I got to hear about developments that pertain to my work in other fields such as sociology and language."
- **Professional development is better balanced with our lives.** It takes a lot of time and energy to travel, file for a leave of absence, and leave family behind to attend training or conferences. Now, these decisions can be made with our whole lives in mind. I may want to attend APCDA next year in Singapore; now I can weigh my desire to attend in person (and visit Singapore) with my life, familial, and work responsibilities and choose what is best for me, my family, and my wellness.
- **Safety is now more of a priority.** We are now more attuned with our health and safety and future in-person training and conference organizers must take this into account. The mental flexibility and coping skills we learned during the pandemic will continue to be useful.



Professor Laarni T. Capinding is a licensed guidance counselor in the Philippines. She is currently taking up her Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling at Miriam College, and presently an Associate Professor at the Department of Psychology at Tarlac State University.

Yes, the future remains uncertain but it is filled with more hope today than during the worst periods of lockdown and COVID spread. These two feelings, hope and uncertainty, are two feelings we can learn to live with because of our pandemic experience. We will carry them forward until we see one another again, in person or virtually.

Follow Laarni at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/laarni-capinding/>.

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– Laarni Capinding

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