



Your Story MATTERS

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Columnist

Withstanding the ripples

Work the last few weeks has been interesting to say the least. The impact of COVID-19 has created a ripple effect for all of us.

For those of us who are privileged, the greatest adjustment may be an unfamiliar boredom as we sift through Netflix, learn how to prepare meals again, and try meditating. Those of us used to a full plate, multi-tasking, and accessible distraction, may find discomfort in the stillness.

Unresolved trauma and grief tend to surface in quiet times and if support is unavailable, the quietness can be traumatic in itself. In contrast, others are getting to rest, reflect, and perhaps heal for the first time.

And then there are those of us with legitimate panic married with immense grief and adjustment. Incomes that dissipated in an instant; support systems that dissolved; hopes that were not realized; family members that fell ill; and death.

For some, COVID-19 has meant a few ripples easily withstood akin to the impacts of a small pebble. For others, it may well have been an asteroid.

There is no guidebook

I have had many clients ask, "How should I be coping with this?"

There is little to be said for *shoulds* and *should nots* in this uncharted situation. There is no guidebook.

COVID-19 has not been the popularized romanticized slowdown for many, while for others it has allowed for unexpected silver linings. There can be guilt and discomfort on both sides of the fence: guilt for feeling positive while others are struggling and guilt for feeling angry and afraid instead of mindful and grateful. Both sides of the fence are valid, are acceptable, and can coexist.

While there is much solidarity and collectivism in the COVID-19 human experience, how we are each navigating this virgin territory is uniquely informed by our social position, privilege, background, past experiences, and core beliefs. This demands grace and patience for ourselves as well as for others. Accepting the ambiguity, the awkwardness, and the uncertainty is central to our resilience as we let go of the tension between perceptions of right and wrong.

Returning to the Basics

Ultimately my suggestions in this pandemic are not so different from what I might encourage amid other situations involving grief or trauma.

Do your best to stay on a routine. The power of a

schedule is that it allows for some predictability during very unpredictable times. Try to uphold what I have deemed "the four foundations of wellness."

- **Sleep:** Have a wind-down routine. Do your best to go to bed on a schedule and wake up on a schedule. Staying out of bed during the day helps you have better sleep at night so do yourself a favor and watch Netflix anywhere other than in your bed.

- **Nutrition:** Do your best to eat whole foods and lots of plants. Try to stay away from processed foods and sugars. Your immune system will be happier too.

- **Physical movement:** Whether you stream yoga on YouTube or get outside while being conscious of distancing for your daily run, please find a way to stay active.

- **Connection:** To people. To spirituality. To nature. This has been more challenging, but in this time it is so very important. Zoom coffee dates, scheduled phone sessions, spiritual practices, and when safe, enjoy nature.

Gaining Perspective

The last few weeks I find myself scouring quotes from wartime leaders — Lincoln, Churchill, Roosevelt, Kennedy, and more who faced immense adversity

and had to rally resilience and some form of hope in times of such bleakness.

I have been thinking a lot about my late grandmother, a Holocaust survivor, the trials and resilience exemplified by my parents and other family members, the grit of the "lost generation" of folks born between 1883-1900 who had to endure the Spanish Flu, two world wars, the Great Depression, and maybe even the Cold War... And finally, I have been reflecting a lot on the resilience of my clients who have faced adversity far greater than the threat of a virus.

While it is perhaps easy for me to say having been thus far lucky amid current circumstances, our country and our world has seen dark days before and will see dark days again. There is a solidarity to be gained in collective grief and struggle. My hope is that out of such we can salvage lessons of humility, resilience, collectivism, and innovation.

Kindness, The Other Ripple Effect

Social media has historically been a hotbed for filtered comparison. It has

been a platform to present a desired image and good or bad, COVID-19 has quickly reorganized priorities.

Suddenly, it seems a bit removed to be posting diet plans, filtered selfies, your new car, or relationship woes. What does seem to be trending however... *kindness*.

And kindness has created its own ripple effect. The generous and philanthropic acts of others popularized and made public have led us to question how we can ourselves contribute.

For those of us who are privileged, this is our opportunity to support our neighbors. It is our responsibility as Americans (and global citizens) to do what we can to uphold our values of life, liberty, and happiness. And personally, I believe the grassroots efforts among our communities are likely to do more for instilling hope and healing than the policies of our governments.

So to conclude, words from Winston Churchill:

"We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give."

Wishing everyone health and safety.

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