

The Glass Half Full....Finding Optimism in a Time of Pandemic

“Try to Be a Rainbow in Someone’s Cloud.”

~Maya Angelou

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is in the news constantly right now. We often hear the bad news about how it’s spreading or impacting daily life. Yet, sometimes difficulties lead to beneficial things. For example:

- **Countries are helping each other.** Medical experts from China flew to hard-hit Italy to share equipment--such as masks and respirators--and knowledge to help fight the virus. Researchers around the world are working on possible treatments and vaccines. Since COVID-19 is affecting nearly everyone in some way, it may bring all humans together like never before.
- **Companies are offering free services or discounted rates.** Many companies are waiving late fees and providing support for their customers. Some are offering free access to certain services or resources such as online educational options for kids.
- **People are helping their communities in wonderful and creative ways.** One community designed a postcard that can be dropped off with neighbors who are at-risk or self-isolating for other reasons, offering help with shopping or a friendly phone call. Many community grocery stores have set aside special times for seniors to shop. Countless schools have found ways to offer meals to children who might otherwise go hungry when schools are closed.

In addition to the good things happening around us, social distancing is forcing many of us to slow down. If you’re spending more time at home, here are some ways to take advantage of it:

- **Make the most of extra time with your family.** Kids are home from school. Events and sports are cancelled. Many community businesses like theaters and libraries are closed. This may leave more time to enjoy things our usual busy schedules didn’t afford such as walking, biking, playing games, or reading together.
- **Allow for new ways of learning for children.** If you are a parent trying to homeschool for the first time, you might find that it’s not so easy to keep students engaged with schoolwork. Homeschool educators recommend giving kids *some* freedom, but not to “un-school” them. Kids, especially teenagers, need structure and guidance. This can be a great time to provide your kids with extra help on areas where they tend to struggle. Or use this time to teach real-world skills – cooking, sewing, money management or home repair.
- **Reach out to friends, families and neighbors.** Even when staying apart physically is important, look for ways to lend a helping hand or put a smile on someone’s face this week.

- **Learn something new.** Maybe you've always wanted to learn another language, how to play the guitar, or how to line-dance. There are numerous apps and online programs where you can learn from the comfort of your home. Many libraries offer free online access to digital books or audio books. If you need continuing education for your profession, check into self-study options, webinars, or online learning options.
- **Catch up on home projects.** This might be the perfect time to clean out the garage and closets, organize files, deep clean the house, or do your taxes.
- **Enjoy a break from commuting and traffic.** Commuting to work is a significant source of stress for many people. If you are now working remotely, use the extra time in your mornings and evenings to recharge and practice self-care.
- **Appreciate the little things.** Being grateful is one way to shift your mindset toward the optimistic, even when bad news is all around us. For example, you might take a moment to truly appreciate your morning cup of coffee, the beauty of nature, or the loved ones around you. If you'd like, start a gratitude journal and write down something you are thankful for each day.
- **Practice more self-care.** Time is often the biggest barrier to doing things like exercising, cooking healthy meals, and meditation. With so many social events being cancelled or postponed, this is a good opportunity to put energy and focus on taking care of you.
- **Keep handwashing "cool."** We hear it over and over again: WASH YOUR HANDS! If we all continue to do this one small thing, we will not only protect ourselves and others from novel coronavirus but also colds, the flu and other viruses.

Difficult times often bring out the best in people. Instead of focusing on the negative during this time, choose to see and create the positives in at least a small way each day.