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SHARING RESOURCES

Blessings from the Heart of Berkeley in a Time of Pandemic

Author: Barry Barkan, Co-Founder, Pioneer Network



So. Here we are in the midst of the global pandemic of 2020, a crisis only a very few among us -- prophetic voices who have been essentially ignored -- could have imagined. *May we all be resilient. May each of us be careful, live our lives with joy, and come through this deeper, wiser, and more committed to the well-being of ourselves, of one another, and of future generations.*

I am hunkering in with my wife partner, Debby. I am doing some cooking and freezing, writing, zooming and facetimeing, and sitting on my porch and enjoying the night. Debby spends a lot of time watching cable news, reaching out to friends and family, engaging her varied interests, and providing the glue that holds our lives together. Younger friends have been calling to see if we need help with anything. *May all those who are reaching out to others offering help and support be blessed with good health, joy and meaning for themselves and all they hold in their hearts.*

The vulnerability we all share has of course been an undercurrent in my life. I don't dwell on the possibility that I may be among those who catch the flu and die. But yesterday, I looked at Debby and was struck as never before by how finite our lives are and how important it is to act in each moment as if it is nearing the last. *May we all wake up all over the world to what's real. Our lives are finite, we are all connected, and our loving kindness and compassion are the glue that binds us together.*

My biggest concern is with the many, many people who are the most vulnerable among us: people who are financially marginalized, people who are without houses living in tents or in

doorways; people who are living from pay-check to pay-check and can't afford to miss work; people who are in overcrowded prisons, jails and detention centers; or people who have fragile health or who like myself simply have lived a long time. *May the greater forces be summoned from within and beyond each of us so that each person who is at risk is protected. May our culture be transformed through the opening created by this break from business as usual so that it becomes imbedded in our common consciousness that we all are connected, and each person has the basic human right to home, health, dignity and opportunity.*

My biggest appreciation is for those who will come to work each day, making sure we have food to eat and medical care when it is urgently needed. Some among them are doing it because they have a calling to serve. Others, because without the paycheck they and their families would become impoverished. *Regardless of motivation, may each and all of them and all they hold in their hearts, be safe and flourish in all aspects of their lives.*

We are inundated with so much information and advice about the virus and how to distance ourselves from infection. Here is some advice from the Elders' Guild we might not receive elsewhere about how to act should the corona virus catch us.

If we become ill, don't blame ourselves. Be loving and kind to each person who is caring for us. They're putting themselves at risk to help us. Our kind consideration, even when we are in the worst of circumstances, is our best insurance that we will receive that extra measure of love and attention that distinguishes great care from good care or even mediocre care.

Barry Barkan is a Berkeley Times contributor. He is a life-long activist, a co-founder of the Elders' Guild, and serves in the Aquarian Minyan of Berkeley as a *Baal Bracha*, master of blessings.

What to Do In These Stressful Times

Author: Susan Wehry, MD

A Blog from the Dementia Action Alliance

<http://www.dea.org/>



The current pandemic is stressful. And like all stress, it sets off a cascade of reactions in our body/mind. Like releasing cortisol which gets us ready to flee or fight. And while heightening our awareness, focusing our attention, having a burst of adrenalized energy may be ok in the short term it takes a toll in the long term. A person of any age with a heart condition or diabetes or respiratory problem is going to be harder hit. Another hormone besides cortisol that gets released, especially in women, in times of stress is oxytocin—sometimes called the ‘tend and befriend’ hormone.

Stress disrupts sleep and often leads to a higher intake of high fat-high sugar comfort foods. And decreased sleep has a negative impact on our immune system

For people living alone, especially those who may rely more on others to meet the basic needs of daily living—like getting groceries or having meals on wheels delivered - the impact of the pandemic on healthy eating may be even greater.

People staying home and living alone tend to be less physically active, which further has a negative impact, especially on older people who tend to lose muscle mass and tone with aging making them more susceptible to falls.

What can you do in these times to minimize stress and uncertainty?

1. Call people in your life who matter to you. If they're older, ask their advice: "Have you ever seen anything like this before?" "Is this what WWII was like?" If they're younger, reassure them: "we'll get through this"

How often should you call? Daily. Just a hello or a check-in restores connection. Talk about something other than the pandemic.

2. Go outside. Look outside. Look at online nature shows. Your "brain on nature" functions better

3. Limit your daily intake of news. Especially TV news. Check in with the news twice a day, and never right before bed.
4. Find a way to be more physically active. Go for a walk. Do some advance problem-solving to figure out how/where to go for a walk that will allow you to practice social distancing. Find an on-line exercise/yoga class.
5. Identify one good source of accurate on-line information and stick with it. I recommend the Center for Disease Control (CDC) or the World Health Organization (WHO). Avoid searching the internet for more info. The CDC has all you need.
6. Participate in virtual coffee hours. Organizations and individuals are setting these up as scheduled or drop-in Zoom calls.
7. Stay active in the community from home. Whatever you liked to do, do it from home. Google Arts and Culture has lined up great virtual museum tours.
8. Remain creative. Tell your story. Stories are how we make meaning. How are you dealing with this? Share your tips with others on Facebook or other social media
9. Find ways to laugh. Laughter improves oxygen intake, stimulates circulation, relaxes muscles.
10. Remember we're #InItTogether and oh yes, #WashYourHands (while whistling your favorite tune).

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