

## 4-10-20 Stories of Sadness and Survival

This time period will be remembered by all as a once in a lifetime experience. People will tell different stories though. They will tell them to their children and grandchildren.

People will have stories to tell about how they were supposed to wear masks, whether or not they could get the masks, all the people who were sewing or folding cloth to make their own.

Some will have stories about the hoarding of disinfecting materials and toilet paper. Others will talk about their solutions to those situations and whether or not they had enough food and the strain on and thanks for the local food pantries.

Oh, there's lots of jokes going around about how we spend our days. People joke about their plan going from the couch to the den back to the couch, binge watching TV shows etc. Others are getting a lot done in their yards, cleaning out their house getting organized, painting rooms and making repairs.

Speaking of repairs some people are doing things that they would have hired somebody for, but they can't get that plumber or carpenter in there. So, they go to YouTube and they see if they can figure it out on their own, and many are!

Those who are blessed with family, whether it's living with family or connecting with them via FaceTime or zoom, they are truly blessed and will have stories of gratitude to pass along to future generations.

We have now reached a point however where we feel sad about the deaths and worry will one of our own be next. The social distancing has become so critical to our stemming the rise and spread of this pandemic virus, that people are now canceling weddings, and are even unable to attend funerals. I will probably never be able to see in person two of my elderly much-loved friends, and that makes me sad. Whoever thought the day would arrive when I'd be grateful that my friends understand, and they accept the fact that I cannot see them?

Let's face it, though, not every marriage out there was a good one before the pandemic. I can only imagine what a strain it must be to be spending too much time with somebody you didn't get along with. Technology is helping many of us, and I can only hope those marriages are seeking on-line counseling and can take the time to improve their marriage. Most don't have the excuse that they're too busy.

While some could possibly improve the marriage during this time of isolation, it certainly does not apply to all. Many police departments are unfortunately seeing an increase of domestic violence. This is unfortunate on so many levels. When the police now hear of domestic violence, they must protect themselves from the COVID-19 virus when they go to that call so that they are prepared for close contact and perhaps a struggle and/or an arrest.

If the domestic relationship had already been an abusive one, I can only hope that they know the resources to call and at least talk to somebody or can escape to someplace else. If violence or assault is imminent, in such circumstances it is always okay to call 911. If there is time to plan and someone needs advice or someone to listen to them, there is the 24/7 crisis hotline 877 785 2020. There is the national sexual assault hotline 800-656-4673. For southeastern Massachusetts there is an organization called New Hope 800-323-4673 and DOVE hotline 617-471-1234. These and many other resources can be found at mass.gov

It is difficult enough for adults to decide to make one of those calls. Who will protect children though? Let's face it, not all people who have children are great parents. They just don't have the skills, or they have problems of their own and now perhaps they are out of work and stuck at home with the very children who annoyed them in the first place. I worry about them. If you know of a situation like this and you think that someone is in immediate danger call 911. If you suspect or know of child abuse or neglect, mass.gov has resources for that also. You can call the Department of Families and Children. If that call is during the night or weekend or on a holiday, call the child at risk hotline 800-792-5200. Don't worry about whether you are a mandated reporter. Let your conscience do the right thing. Then let the experts handle it from there.

This shall pass and most of us will survive. Some of us will be scarred. Perhaps the scars are physical, emotional, psychological and/or economical. However, just as people survived the horrific 1918 pandemic and they survived the Great Depression, we will get through this also. Some of us will have learned great lessons, appreciate life more, be filled with gratitude and in many ways be better people than we were before the COVID-19 pandemic.

That can happen. This new normal is teaching us lessons in survival and gratitude that can lead to an even better new normal.

*Cathleen Drinan is the health agent for Halifax, MA. She can be reached at 781 293 6768 or cathleen.drinan@halifax-ma.org*