

#### 4-17-20 Gifts for future generations

Last week I said, “This new normal is teaching us lessons in survival and gratitude that can lead to an even better new normal.” And I believe it. On the medical front there may be new protocol for infection control. Perhaps supermarkets from autumn to spring, through the flu season, maybe they will continue to have one-way traffic in the aisles and one door for enter and another door for exit in order to increase the social distancing to keep us healthy. That could be a new normal that remains because we learned it helps to prevent the spread of disease. Who knows? But we shall see.

What we could do right now is start documenting what we are experiencing and what lessons we are learning from it. We could pass those lessons along to our children and grandchildren. If your children are too young or you feel it's inappropriate to ask them to write about these experiences, ask them to draw what is happening in their everyday life. The request, of course, does not need to include words such as illness sickness disease or COVID-19. It is presented as an at home art and craft idea or writing exercise. I wonder what they will draw. Will it be a drive-by birthday party that they still really loved? Or how about the birthday parties where fire and police drove around with their sirens on in a happy way to celebrate? That will be a happy life-long memory.

Maybe they will write about or draw a picture of missing their teachers, their cousins, their friends, their grandparents. Maybe they will write or draw a picture of their mother yelling at them to stop playing video games and get their homework done, as recently happened with two of my daughters and their children, in particular, their sons.

While these are tense times there are also some comical times. One of my daughters yelled at her son that he needed to stop playing video games and get his homework done and then she found out he was working on his homework! It was pretty funny, and the teacher will be pleased with the story that there was an involved parent. (Believe me, she had good reason for her assumption!)

During a recent sibling Zoom gathering I learned my sister-in-law recently discovered a box of letters and documents from her mother's 50th high school anniversary. One of those documents was a letter from her classmate describing what it was like to graduate from high school when World War II was beginning. Now is like then. It is a threshold that none of us have known before. It should be

documented. Those drawings and descriptions and essays and journal entries will be gifts to our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren.

The data will be there from the scientists, from the mathematicians, and from the epidemiologists. How this affected our lives, however, those are personal stories and they need to be documented in personal ways, not with graph bars, charts and statistics.

So, I urge you to get personal while we are keeping social distancing, to get personal in your documentation of the COVID-19 pandemic. How is it affecting your everyday life? Have you lost your job? What did you do when you did not find enough toilet paper? How did you handle your sadness at not being able to visit a loved one in a nursing home? Did you lose hair in response to the stress? Did you gain weight?

Did you learn any lessons from this difficult time? Did you learn how to save money by being thrifty? Did you learn the importance of having fun in different ways? Did you find other ways to maintain friendships even if not in person?

Even if you are not one of the people sewing masks, you can take pictures of those who are and save it in a journal as examples of a heroic effort to help others.

A scrapbook is a kind of old fashion idea, but it would be very useful in these times to document this once in a lifetime, perhaps once in a three generational lifetime, way of documenting our experience of life. And of course, a scrapbook can be physical because some people enjoy using their hands and cutting and pasting and painting. Others will enjoy a digital scrapbook with pictures and writing all done electronically.

We have gifts to give future generations. Let's do it!

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