



## The COVID Blues

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I'm a "glass half full" kind of girl, and I appreciate the gifts that I've been given. I do my meditation practice. I do my exercise: yoga and cardio. I make sure that I remain socially connected and try to remember to tell people how much I care. With all that, I still occasionally get a really bad case of the blues. My heart hurts. I hit the wall. For me it's mornings. Once I drag myself out of bed and get going it's better, but still present. Everyone, even those living with others, is lonely.



In times past I would be able to shake it off by going out and seeing a movie, or driving over to a friend's house, or getting together with a few people for a nice meal and a few drinks. I know some people are doing those things right now. But I don't believe we are through with COVID-19, or that it's through with us. Neither do I like being the Cassandra in the group, but I believe we're headed for another wave before there's anything like a vaccine. I also have my doubts on the vaccine front, but more about that later.

I'm pretty sure (because so many people have been telling me the same thing) that this feeling of doom or depression or sadness or whatever you want to call it is affecting most of us— and it's natural and human to feel this way. If it gets really bad, get help. Don't wait to get support. We all need each other. But what to do strategically?

I've been doing a lot of social distancing, hanging out outdoors, and I just bought an outdoor heater. But I think it's going to be pretty limiting to head into the cooler weather while social distancing, when we are still confronted with what appears to be a much longer marathon than most of us had ever thought.

I am absolutely certain that this intense situation will be over. But I'm not sure that is likely before Spring. We will get herd immunity one way or another, either through a vaccine or more natural ways, as numbers come up. The virus itself will become less complicated and dangerous as we understand it more; it will probably weaken, as do many flus. At some point it will be a "normal" virus. But it's a slippery little thing; each time we think we get our hands on it and figure out how it operates in the body, it throws us another little curveball, making coming to a comfortable place quite a bit more difficult.

Vaccines are tricky things too. Viruses mutate, changing over time. There will be a vaccine that will eventually work, but it may not be as simple as just coming up with something and never having to tweak it to remain effective. Also, we don't know how long immunity will be conveyed. Immunity to a virus can last for years, but sometimes for mere weeks.

So....let's do some strategizing. Going to a concert is probably not going to be safe for a long time. But it's important to recognize that depression itself, or milder plain old blues, will be part of the landscape for a while. And we know that it's harmful: depression lowers your immunity, it makes you cranky, makes you less able to do your job and to support others who need you. So let's lower the risk. This information keeps evolving, but here I want to focus on social strategy rather than straight-up medical stuff.

### **Some COVID Strategies**

People are forming pods. Small groups of people, perhaps two family units, all get tested, all conduct themselves in a very safe manner, and spend some normal time together. This can be friends or family members, but it must be people that you absolutely trust to be truthful with you about what they're doing. Because as we all know, even if we ourselves could survive the virus, we are a community— and there are many among us that are very vulnerable. I don't want to be the one who kills off the old lady who's standing next to me at Whole Foods by my carelessness, do you? Pods are a good option and people are

making it work. Practice safe touch with these people. Masked hugs, maybe a back rub can go a long way. Non-sexual touch is a human requirement.

Find creative ways to do social distancing. I was recently sent an article about people in Israel watching a movie from their boats while floating in the Dead Sea— it really was creative. Here in the U.S. drive-in movies are making a comeback. I think there may be ways to continue to create outdoor space where you can see people and be at a safe distance from them and do some normal activities. Dinners where people bring their own food and sit outside work too.

I'm getting so very sick of Zooming. But it does help. I did a virtual condolence call recently and although it felt really weird to do it, it was way better than not being able to connect at all. So although I find Zoom and FaceTime uncomfortable mediums, they're better than nothing and at least you get to see some unmasked faces. We don't see many smiles these days, and that's sad.

Keep moving. We still need exercise, sunshine and fresh air. Daily walks, gardening, local drives or day trips, other outdoor activities connect us to nature, restore us and relieve the feelings of isolation. Indoors, find some online workouts that suit your level of ability. If you're working at home, take the breaks you need to refresh and restore your focus.

Remember the link between food and mood. Are you taking comfort food beyond a reasonable doubt? The current meme of the "Quarantine 15" (gaining weight from eating more and moving less) is a reality for many. Too many sugary, fatty, processed foods lower immunity and affect mood. If a short stroll through the neighborhood can become a helpful habit, so can a mindful stroll through the supermarket. Since we're home more, let's try to cook more, and make it as fresh as possible. Bonus points for having a vegetable garden!

Try a "media fast." It can be difficult and overwhelming to keep up with the news these days. If you find yourself bogging down, consider backing off for a day or two— or at least check in just to keep up, but don't get hung up in the constant news feed. Maybe take that time to meditate— take in and send out some good vibes. And share those good vibes when you have to be out in the world; acts of kindness, making others laugh or smile are guaranteed to lift your own mood too.

Don't ignore health symptoms. It's been troubling me that people with severe problems are not going to the doctor. I am myself I'm not going to go to the dentist until I absolutely have to, or until this thing is over; but if you have severe pain or symptoms that might be serious or life-threatening, go get help. Emergency rooms are getting better and better at keeping people safe and there's no point in not dealing with a big problem because of fear. Feeling unwell can certainly be a factor in depression. If you're having a problem, make a "telemedicine" appointment with your health care professional for support and advice.

Let's talk

I'd love to open this up. If you all would send me ideas that you have for safe ways to cope with the COVID Blues, I'd be happy to compile them and send them out in a future newsletter. Remember, "troubles shared are troubles halved." Keep connected and get support.

Namaste,  
Wendy