

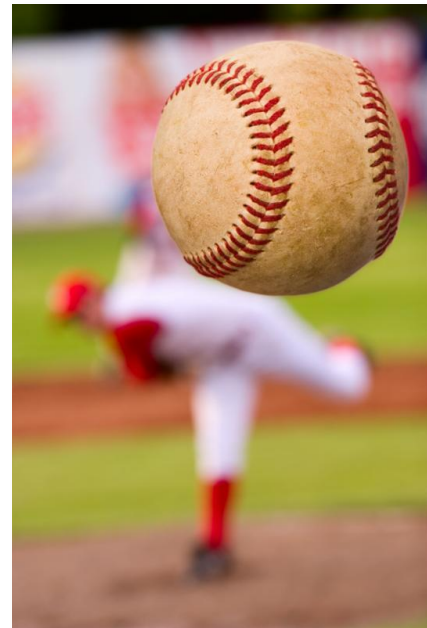


Seventh Inning Stretch

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Perhaps it's my love of baseball and the start of spring training, but I hope I'll make it to an in person Red Sox game this season.

So much has occurred since my last article. It's time to take a stretch and prepare for the end of the game— look at the scoreboard and see where we need to make a final push to get through this— where do we need to make adjustments for the best possible outcome. Be prepared for that important pitch. . . Ok, I've beaten that analogy to the ground (or should I say mound).



It's been a year plus since we thought that this “probably just a bad flu” might restrict us for the winter. Yikes. A year without hugs, birthday parties, holidays and more. Everyone I have spoken with, regardless of their particular living situation, has felt lonely. We long for all the normal interactions that may have seemed trivial, but now seem like a painful loss. We have replaced our “naked in the hallway dreams” with “maskless in the hallway” (me too, much to my surprise).

Deaths are down from COVID and cases are starting to come down in the U.S. It's too soon to attribute this to the vaccine. Healthcare workers have learned how to care for COVID patients more effectively, and more people are taking the necessary precautions to keep safe.

Best and Not-so-Best Case Scenarios

Best case: We get to reasonable herd immunity levels by the summer and can do many activities we miss— on a careful, limited basis. So maybe my ball game will be toward the end of the season and in a 1/4 full ballpark. Still, wow, compared to last summer. We can go to restaurants and perhaps choose to eat outside safely. We can hang out with people, in a greater more expanded bubble of folks with similar agreed upon safety levels.

Not-so-best case: Many fewer people are able (or willing) to get the vaccine, —or the new variants have gotten enough out of control that we have been set back many steps, and are looking at longer quarantined and semi-quarantined situations.

We all want the first scenario, so what can we personally do to get there?

The List

1. First and foremost: wear your mask (maybe even two), wash your hands, stay out of crowded situations, keep to your bubble and don't start taking dumb risks now just because we are so incredibly tired of the situation, or feel like "well we would've gotten it already if we were going to." Maybe buy that glitter mask that you have in the back of your mind as silly but fun, because masks are going to be a part of our lives for at least the next year. I think I might get a cat face one.

2. Keep an ear out for major developments. Things are changing on a daily basis. As data comes in from around the world, we learn what works and what doesn't. Make the adjustments that you can. They are often simple and provide more safety. Remember, the scientists are learning too.

3. Get the vaccine. I am not a big fan of vaccines as a panacea, nor as a substitute for other immunity strategies. Vaccines should be used judiciously. However, COVID is out of control. I feel we have a responsibility to our families and our communities to get this thing managed. And right now vaccines appear to be the only viable alternative (another year of quarantine anyone?).

I have been eligible to receive the vaccine as a therapist for about three weeks, but I am going to wait for the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. I'm doing this because in my particular situation, I have decided that a more traditional vaccine will be safer for me. That doesn't mean that you should make the same decision. I am going by the facts (and my personal medical history) and deciding based on what I know today.

I still spend hours a day (no kidding) reading up on COVID and I'm happy to talk about vaccine choices and strategies, (but of course you should discuss with your doctor before making your choice).

4. Do those damn silly things that you put off. As much as it's incredibly annoying to be so limited, go a little Marie Kondo and clean out that closet— you may never have the time again. I redid my office: new floor, new heat and air conditioning, and new carpet. It helps me to visualize all of you coming back in.

5. Take a news fast. I have waited way too long to do this, and I'm pretty fried. I'm going to try to go a week without TV news. I will still keep up on medical stuff. But no matter what your political view, many have reached overload. There will be time to reengage, but perhaps a vacation is in order.

6. Speaking of which, start planning that vacation, weekend, or family visit. Just knowing it will be possible in the foreseeable future is refreshing.

7. If you haven't already, get back to your exercise. (The Jell-O look is not good on any of us.) And exercise is a mood lifter.

8. Work on getting your sleep back to your old patterns. Change takes a while. Yoga Nidra for deep relaxation is good help for this, and YouTube has hundreds to try.

And lastly, reach out for help if you need it. We all crash out some days. And even long baseball games end eventually. Life is beautiful and every day a gift. It's just hard to see that sometimes.

Namaste,

Wendy



