

LOST and.....FOUND

By Doris H. Goldstein

An elementary rule of physics; every action has a reaction. Likewise, people, like motion, respond to circumstances around them; action=reaction. In this era of the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, it is natural to try to make some sense of it all; so what has been lost and what of anything has been found?

Lost..... personal autonomy; the option to go and come as I please; anywhere and everywhere, any time, any day. 'Shelter in Place', stay home, isolate yourself within your own walls, the outside world is temporarily off limits.....all of this is so unnatural, so incongruous with a basic need to physically experience our neighborhood, our city, our world. While privileged to have more than adequate shelter, how can I enjoy being a prisoner in my own house?

Lost..... the lack of everyday personal contacts with others; family, friends and strangers. Just walking into any public place, there are people all around sharing the space, engaging in everyday life. There is instant recognition of our communality...we are the same spices....we recognize each other ...we smile...we nod...we walk beside, behind, in front of them...we sit next to each other on a bus....we stand in line at a bank....we are engaged in a silent, mundane dance with what can be hundreds of people on any given day.

Now each of these humans can potentially, unknowingly be our enemy and transfer this invisible invader to us, causing pain, suffering, even death. We must protect ourselves, remain a safe distance away, avoid all physical contact, and view each other with suspicion. How unsettling, the antithesis of normalcy. Will the loss of even casual interaction with others become the new norm?

Lost.....a sense of order...a routine has also disappeared. While not 'employed', I have accepted commitments to organizations that are important to me. There were meetings to attend, projects to develop, programs to plan; I was busy and sometimes felt pressed for time. Now I have lots of time but don't feel I am accomplishing much. The days merge into weeks and there is a gnawing feeling of emptiness.

Lost.....I miss my religious community. The culmination of my week was the weekly observance of Shabbat often beginning with guests for a special meal on Friday night then coming together with many others on Saturday morning at the synagogue. The familiar melodies and the cadence of Hebrew echoing within the walls was grounding. The particular message of the weekly Torah portion was sometimes meaningful,

sometimes obscure, sometimes confusing but was always a reminder that I am heir to a tradition that has continued to resonate through the millennia and that I have even confidence that it will do so into the future. I am lonely for the human connection of familiar faces and the opportunity to chat when the service is completed. I even miss those with whom I sometimes disagree.

Lost..... trust in the current national leaders and those who enable them. This is a national (and international) crisis yet we are witness to a constant stream of misleading and blatant untruths, blinding partisanship, lack of adherence to and appreciation of scientific and medical facts, incompetence, greed and self-aggrandizement and complete lack of empathy for the suffering and pain of millions of our fellow citizens. I find no coherent leadership or much needed assistance for governors, mayors and local officials to marshal all the energy, creativity and 'American Know How' to manufacture and deliver what is needed to mitigate the consequences of the virus on the population. There seems to be very little or no oversight on the millions of our dollars being allocated and spent by political favorites and other insiders.

I have always voted but been a silent observer of political life with the perhaps naïve belief that most politicians, when pressured, will ultimately do what is in the best interest of America and its people. Given the current climate, that has also been lost. So, in all of the morass has anything been found?

Found.....a renewed and deepened appreciation for the accident of my birth and the comfort of my life for which I claim no credit. Reading the terrifying statistics of the overrepresentation of deaths among fellow citizens of color brings that fact into sharp focus. While our country has made some painful progress in overcoming the past, there is no question that being born non-white insures immediate burdens. This medical crisis with its attendant lack of intelligent, caring leadership has ripped the dressing off an ever festering sore.

Found.....daily thankfulness for my well-being and that of my spouse and family. It is so easy to take the basics for granted.....health, adequate food and shelter. But that complacency is quickly shattered by the press of the remote where images of line-ups at food banks, escalating reports of infections and the homeless population struggling to survive appear on the screen in full color. Why does it require a Covid-19 to force me to truly appreciate all that I have?

Found..... a torrent of words of adulation for the medical community in places like New York City, Albany, Ga., New Orleans and other places where the outbreak has been so severe. That appreciation begins with the hospital maintenance staff up to the most highly trained professionals. Each and every one is risking their lives being in close or even remote proximity with patients who are sick and dying.

Found.....the hope I will never again look without seeing the grocery cashiers, the mailman/woman, the garbage collectors, bus drivers, delivery people, gas station attendants and so many others who have continued to work every day in spite of the risk to themselves and their families. Many have been infected and some have died.

Found.....a deepened appreciation for the local newspaper and those who work to produce it as it tries to deliver accurate reporting which counterbalances what is blaring on radio, TV and social media. I know many people regard the paper as not worthy of their time and support. Some say they sometimes read it on-line which I think is a poor substitute for physically turning the oversize pages, stopping to read a short piece concerning a business or personality far away from my usual world. The newspaper keeps me rooted in my city and state in a visceral way that I don't think would happen without it.

As is the case with much of the fullness of life.....there is loss and gain; plus and minus. Fortunately, in the case of this pandemic, the losses are not permanent but I hope the gains are.

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