

Pandemic Diary- Chronicles from Isolating in my Jogging Pants

April 13th, 2020

It's Easter weekend and we have been in isolation for about a month. It has been 30 days since I have left my home to do anything but buy groceries and go for walks. Life as we know it has halted and everyone is trying to stay safe and avoid catching this virus... otherwise known as Covid-19. Stuck in isolation has forced me to spend much of my time pondering and reflecting about our current reality. Despite these very challenging times, the first thing that comes to my mind is how lucky my family and I are today. For starters, no one in my immediate family has caught the virus. My elderly parents are thankfully at home and not in a hospital or a long-term care facility. I see them once a week when I bring them their groceries and although I am unable to hug them and kiss them as I normally do, I now find solace just knowing that they are safe. Do not get me wrong, these times are hard emotionally. A simple act such as kissing or hugging one's parent can now, under these current circumstances, cause much more pain than good. This fact is very hard to accept. My heart breaks a little more each time I leave their doorstep after I hand them their groceries. Perspective is everything these days. I continue to tell myself; my actions today will serve my family and me tomorrow. Logic must win over emotions. Not easy to maintain but this is something that the pandemic is forcing me to work on. I knew there was a teaching lesson in here somewhere! In fact, I can say with certainty, this pandemic has given our society several lessons to ponder and consider!

I never thought that I'd find myself telling my parents to "stay home" or question why they need to leave the house. This is especially difficult to comprehend because I bring them everything they need on a weekly basis. Parenting one's parents should come with an instruction manual. In hindsight, I can now relate to what it must have been like for them when I was 16 years old and constantly trying to leave the house. I'm not sure who had it worse... but in my defense, there was no pandemic when I took off to gallivant around town. This pandemic will teach us all a few lifelong lessons.

Another thing I have come to realize is that our words and expressions we choose to use during this time have a drastic effect on how we interpret the pandemic. As a whole, I think we need to stop referring to our situation as being "stuck at home" or "stuck in isolation" and start acknowledging that we are in fact, "safe in isolation at home". There are many, many, people who would literally die for this luxury. The pun here is definitely intended.

It's day 30 of this pandemic. I am safe at home with my partner. My parents have started listening to the "parenting" that is being imposed on them by my sister and me. I briefly saw (from a distance) my family members over the weekend and of course, there is thankfully wine in my cellar. I'm ok today. We're ok today. And the cat... well it's literally incredible to observe just how much he sleeps in a day. He seriously needs to wake up and do something else, like go for a walk! Isolating has allowed me to really work on my observation skills.

Tomorrow shall bring new beginnings...

Perhaps tomorrow will be the day that I can find flour and test my fate at baking bread just like the rest of Montreal is currently doing. Thankfully, we are totally stocked up on toilet paper!

I live for the excitement that tomorrow will bring!?!

April 14th, 2020

I returned to my “dining room” office today. The long weekend did me good. The last two weeks were quite stressful since we started redeploying residents to different services to help manage the Covid crisis in the hospitals. The amount of work that has been done to ensure hospitals are staffed with enough physicians, residents and nurses to meet the needs and provide care for the patients being admitted is monumental. Never, in my wildest dreams, did I ever think that a worldwide pandemic would come across my immediate surroundings and play such a pivotal role in everyday life. I still find it strange that the night before this all started, I was preparing to give a training session to one of my new colleagues. Within a few hours our reality, as we knew it, suddenly changed and just like that, I was informed that I had to stay home until further notice. No more traveling to work, no more office, or seeing my colleagues in person. The pandemic has forced everyone to act and to act quickly. Within days, our entire team was set-up to work from home and learning to manage change with very limited resources. My change management and conflict resolution skills have certainly come in handy during this past month. Our resiliency and ability to adapt to change and new circumstances have been put to the extreme test. Our world as we know it literally came to a halt and was altered right before us. It amazes me how quickly everyone came together to ensure that our department/ divisions, hospitals, teaching programs continue to function.

As much as I have witnessed how quickly our teams adjusted to change, I have also observed how the pandemic has led to increased stress, frustration, uncertainty, fear and exhaustion. For someone who plays a role rooted in providing support, guidance and offering solutions, this past month has really tested my emotional IQ. We’re all learning (even the health experts!) to manage in this time of uncertainty but as the demands keep piling up, our ability to see the cautionary signs in front us have become extremely blurred. This pandemic is here to stay, at least for now, and we need to re-learn how to take a step back, reflect, BREATHE (in and out) and allow ourselves to take a break from all of this mayhem. We’re running a marathon, not a sprint and working on autopilot to serve everyone around us just isn’t going to be sustainable in the long run.

It’s been difficult acknowledging that my words, suggestions, ideas, extra hands to help haven’t been enough to provide adequate solutions. If there is one thing I learned this week, it’s that the simple act of listening can pay dividends during these stressful times. I’m told it has helped but I can’t help wish there was more I could offer that would make a bigger difference or reduce some anxiety. It’s never easy when you hear the tears in the eyes of colleagues trying to hold it together for everyone around them. Sometimes.. you just need to let it out and vent with those who understand.... So... that’s what we did... Vented by zoom—the new-age approach for therapy during social distancing! #Cavabienaller #stayhome #savelives #zoommeetingsforthefuture.

Tomorrow we find out if we matched in the 2nd iteration. A new day and a new reason to get up and put on a fresh pair of joggings pants. #Cavabienaller. 😊