

To Be Better ... On Purpose!

Who do we want to be when this is all over? I don't know a single person who believes that we will go back to life as we knew it. Some people think that our differences will be measurable in degrees; we'll be mildly different perhaps, if at all, as a result of behavioral adjustments reflecting what we've learned about, say, hygiene or remote meeting technologies. But I want more and with all my heart I pray that you do, too! The price that has been paid in this age of covid-19 warrants much more.

How different we will be can be much more than simply a matter of degrees; rather than being mildly different with behavioral adjustments reflecting lessons of hygiene and remote meeting skills, we can choose to be dramatically different simply because we will have the opportunity to do so!

None of us has ever experienced the singular universal moment when every individual will simultaneously confront this question in nearly every facet of our lives. The very first time we're reunited with family members and close friends with whom we haven't been living during the pandemic; the very first time I sit with my clerical staff; the very first time our board reconvenes face-to-face; the very first time we process admission of a new patient we'll have the opportunity to make a decision affecting who we are, who we'll be, how we behave, and how we shape the outcomes of that interaction. The minute we go back to physically proximate life, we're going to start making choices about whether we do things the old ways, modestly adjust them, or dramatically change what we do and how we do it so that the outcomes of our efforts are different.

And it doesn't need to be all that dramatic: what if we were to identify something we would like to see different and spend a few minutes now - as we sit alone in our homes - identifying behavioral changes we can make that can influence or ultimately effect that changed outcome? It would require just one thing: ***intentionality***.

Every one of us has something we would like to see better in our relationships, in our work, or in our community ... something we care about but have left on the back burner unattended while we lived life; ignored (perhaps with just a tinge of guilt) because we simply never had the time to work on it. For most of us, the pandemic plays out as a giant hiatus from our all-consuming bustle. On a personal level, I challenge you to clarify that specific "something" and then (just this once) to think linearly with me to identify specifically what you do that helps produce that outcome. Think like a scientist, in terms of cause-and-effect: what do you do that causes (or, at least, helps to cause) that effect? Got it? Good, we're halfway there.

You've identified the outcome that you would like to see changed along with your own behavioral contribution(s) that kept it that way. Now comes the hard part: What are you going to do about it? The dramatic once-in-a-lifetime opportunity the pandemic has given us is the chance to never repeat what you did before if what you did contributed to outcomes you want to see changed. Today, envision very specifically what you will do differently the very first time the situation arises so as to produce a different outcome ... and what you'll do, thereafter, to sustain that changed outcome.

Here are the ***tools of intentionality***: envision the outcome you want to achieve; envision the (changed) behavior that you think will help produce that outcome; commit to and exercise that (changed) behavior; and then hold yourself accountable by measuring whether or not and how much the outcome actually changes. Period.

In short: ***be better***. And, if we all try to do this beginning the day the pandemic lifts, then we can begin to argue that the collective social benefits will have been worth the costs.