

The Millennial in a State of Emergency

It is 3 am.... or at least I think it is...oh wait that is the sun...it burns... my only friends are Oreos and Netflix. I've resorted to making raids short to the kitchen for scraps only when I am sure most of my family are asleep, or not in the vicinity, so as to avoid any actual contact with these heathens that think hydroxychloroquine is the cure for Corona.

As you can imagine, this is not okay!



We are at 300 cases of COVID-19 now! What is going on! I cannot stop hyperventilating!

Ok.... I am calm. Let's start again.

Hello Everyone, it's Andrew the Millennial here. Like of all you I am working through the scary, dangerous and confusing time the best way I know how, Oreos and Netflix. Just when I thought life way getting back onto some sort of track BAM! 300 NEW CASES!

Before the new wave of cases my life had purpose. I was teaching year 9 student's theatre a part of the Moresby Arts Theatre's Youth Arts Program. Interesting challenge considering we had to do theatre, 'socially distanced', without touching and with masks on. Do you know how hard that is? Do you know how hard that is to do with year 9 students? It goes something like this:

"Stop hugging, you see each other every day!"

"Put your mask back on!"

"You need to show emotion through the mask!"

"Saaaaaaannnnnitzzzzzzze!"

"Did you just touch your face?"

"Why don't you know how to cry on command?" Then, "DON'T TOUCH YOUR TEARS!"

As you can imagine, this is difficult. Not one to complain to. I have had my CORONASCARE - a few weeks ago, I was very sick. I only had a two of the COVID-19 symptoms but I called the COVID-19 hotline anyway. I was scared. Brief backstory, I did not want to call the hotline, Dr Ann made me as an experience to help improve my writing and artistry. AND

well, ok, I was actually sick. I knew (well I know I can't know, but I didn't want to know) it might be COVID-19 because I do have a heart condition and I hadn't been on my medication, and yes, I was sick and breathless... but anyway, happy now Dr Ann?

Calling into the hotline (FYI its 1800 200) proved to be not as scary as I thought. I explained I had a pre-existing medical condition and that my symptoms where sneezing a lot and was very tired. It was when they encouraged me to go in for testing that I started to feel fear. Fear that maybe, just maybe, I had COVID-19. This fear then turned into an insistent denial I didn't real need a test. Then, every time they called to see if I was tested, I would say I was okay, and it was something else. Dr Ann was so impressed so impressed they checked on me!

This same sort of weird human denial drives stigma about HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis. The fear of having this disease and being a patient made me fearful to go and get tested. It also didn't help that every time someone called urging me to go to get tested, that there seemed to be a misunderstanding about my previous calls. The next person would call saying "oh my dear I understand you have all the symptoms," instead of the two I reported.

Eventually I did go to the hospital to pick up my new medicines for my heart condition, where I then got tested for COVID 19, which came back negative.

Yay! for being Corona free!

It was a huge relief to be COVID free but at the same time I wondered if my own fear and denial is what many other Papua New Guineans are feeling. If that is the same thing that deters them from calling in and getting checked? If so, then are there more people being brave and getting checked or if you are like my family, do you think that they already knew the number of cases and are just leaking it slowly. (Ooooooooooh more conspiracy thinking).

In the weeks since, I've become more cautious. Even if the lockdown has been lifted, with the numbers on the rise I intend to stay safe. I hope you do as well. Wash your hands, keep your distance and #coveryourcough.

From Andrew, The Millennial,

Businesses for Health: Tuberculosis & HIV

[*4700 people died of TB in PNG last year. Every death was preventable - watch our virtual World TB Day*](#)

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