

Staying Calm and Strong Through This Crisis

On a scale of 1 -10, how wobbled are you by the coronavirus crisis? If you are wobbling a lot at the moment; join the club. At some point, my wobble level reached a crescendo, but since then, it seems to have gone down somewhat. However I still have to be supremely vigilant or I notice anxiety creeping back into my mind and body.

I am beginning to notice what wobbles me and what calms me, so I thought I would share my preliminary findings with you today.

First of all, searching the web to find the latest news about the virus and the shut-down of the whole world increases my wobbling exponentially and yet I still find myself indulging in this bad habit from time to time! It also wobbled me last week me to go to the supermarket and see so many empty shelves and panic buying. So I have started to shop at small local food shops where the atmosphere is much calmer. In this simple way, I feel I am taking some control over my environment and over those situations that trigger my anxiety. You may notice that your anxiety or irritation triggers are quite different from mine, but the same principle applies: wherever possible, avoid whatever, or whoever triggers your fear and anxiety.

Second, finding wonderful new Chi Kung teachers, spiritual talks and powerful meditations on You Tube is really helping me to tune into love and peace on a daily basis, rather than giving into the big temptation to be either fearful or angry with the world around me. Again, who and what inspires me may be quite different from who inspires you. But I highly recommend going on a You Tube 'guru' search or a You Tube Tai Chi or Chi Kung Master search and then keep tuning into the teachers who inspire you the most.

Third, if you are living with others, please make sure you give them some space each day to prevent you getting on each other's nerves. If we are currently living with someone, we can really count our blessings, but we do not need to be on top of each other all of the time. If someone you live with is constantly talking in a really fearful or angry way about the crisis, please do your best to change the conversation to something much more positive, because angry or fearful energy is toxic and depressing, whereas the energy of gratitude or compassion is healing and empowering.

If you are living on your own please pick up the phone every day and ring someone and talk to them for a while and share your worries and your joys. It will help you feel connected and keep you sane. Please do not think others will not welcome your call. Most of us are desperate to do whatever we can to support those who are currently in isolation.

Fourth, please do your very best to avoid succumbing to the temptation to ruminate on fearful 'What if?' thoughts or angry 'What the hell are they doing?' thoughts. None of us has a clue how this is all going to pan out, not even world-leading epidemiologists, top scientists and doctors. So please give politicians a break. They are struggling to protect us, without

having a clue what to do for the best. Getting angry with those in charge may give you a temporary boost of energy, but in the long run holding onto a load of anger is definitely bad for your health and well-being.

Fifth, find something to do each day with your hands because this will ground you and keep you in the present moment where all is well. Gloria and I have taken up knitting 12 inch squares that will go to make up a blanket for Syrian refugees. Of course, this will not help the refugees much at all - and some days, I have to un-knit almost as much as I knit because I am such a poor knitter. But knitting is really helping Gloria and me to stay mindful, calm and occupied doing something that at least feels helpful. If you cannot knit, or do not fancy knitting, how about trying your hand at baking, practising playing a musical instrument, gardening or sketching? Don't worry at all about how good you are with your hands, just do it and notice whether or not it has a good effect on your mental and emotional well-being.

Sixth, let us all reflect on how incredibly spoiled we have all been in the last 50 plus years and then focus on being incredibly grateful for all that we still have in life. So many millions of individuals throughout history have suffered far, far worse than we are now. We still have plenty to eat. We are not terrified of being carted off and murdered by totalitarian death squads. We have the internet and so we are not nearly as bored as people must have been when they were quarantined during the plague times hundreds of years ago. We also have a brilliant health care system with some really effective treatments for the sick - which was definitely not the case 100 years ago during the devastating Spanish Flu pandemic.

Finally, please do not think that if you are stuck at home doing nothing, there is nothing you can do to help others during this mega world crisis. Each and every one of us who makes a commitment to staying as calm and positive as we possibly can every day of this crisis makes a real difference to the quality of the energy in our local community.

Whether they are conscious of it or not, all human beings are affected by the quality of the emotional energy around them as well as the air quality –which by the way is getting better by the day as the world slows down. By giving priority to maintaining our own physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health, we make a real contribution to our neighbourhood, our country and even the whole planet, especially if at the end of any practice or meditation we do, we simply say, 'May this practice be of benefit to all suffering, sentient beings.'

STAY STRONG. STAY WELL. STAY IN LOVE

Peggy Foster
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