



## COVID\_19 - Plus Est En Vous - And 5 Things You Absolutely Must Work On Today!

*"Give me a place to stand and I will move the world"* Archimedes

It is a truth universally acknowledged that it is easier to begin a story than to end it and with COVID\_19 that is no less true.

We don't yet know how, or when it will end, but our story starts here.

### 15th Century Flanders

And *"Plus est en vous"* translates into English as, *"There is more in you"*.

It was the motto of the influential 15th century noble family the Van Gruuthuse, who lived in Flanders, now Belgium.

The most famous member of the family Lodewijk van Gruuthuse (1422–1492), was a true Renaissance figure — Learned, erudite, cultured, well-lettered — He owned a very large [library](#) of illuminated manuscripts which was one of the largest of the time, and the so-called *Gruuthuse Manuscript* which carries his name is world famous and recognised as a masterpiece of Flemish art.

Lodewijk found a place to stand, made his mark and moved the world with his lasting legacy.

### And Today

Well these are challenging and uncompromising times, but this piece is about creating a *newnormal*, with 5 things that I believe you absolutely must work on, craft and hone to dig deep and deeper still to unearth all that is in you — And it may not be so difficult, or out of reach as at first you might think!



## A Capricious World

Even before Coronavirus the world was a capricious and unpredictable place — predictably so, but even small actions — little adjustments — can yield far-reaching results and guide you to a place to stand where you can make your mark.

Where you can build and enhance your inner agency, by just letting go. To some degree we all fear losing control, because that leads us into an unknown territory — and that's where chaos resides, waiting and wanting us to fail.

But do we now have any choice and evolution is cleverer than we are. Success on any level often starts with failure — You've just got to learn to let-go and *fail-forward* — and meaning is found in the coexistence and movement between chaos and order.

Where you can build on — not shoot down, or allow others to shoot down — your perspective, your curiosity, and your diversity.

Where you can embrace novelty and stand strong in your *newnormal* & remember this, as far as we know one day spent on earth is the most amazing thing in the universe — You've got to make it count!

So, here and in no particular order are 5 things I believe you absolutely must work-on, craft and bend to your will starting today:

- **Allow Big Thoughts**

Any intelligent fool can make things more complex, but it takes a touch of genius and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction.

Learn to cultivate your intellect and nurture savvy thoughts. Indulge your *Being* and *Being Present*. Embrace different perspectives and the fecundity of the profound. Be vital. Engaged. Connected.

Your inner agency will grow by allowing yourself to let-go, but it is rooted in your connectedness and inner strength lies in the strengths of these connections, rather than in their absence — In celebrating your interdependence, rather than being independent and floating untethered through life like John Donne's *Island*.

Remember — *"You are a a piece of the continent, a part of the main!"* And human connection is even more important now!

Suppose you were able to look through a gigantic, super powerful electron microscope. What would you see?

Well, in fact, what you thought was form and substance, shape and colour, would turn out to be almost emptiness; you would see patterns of subatomic particles as far apart as specks of stars in outer space: And if you looked at yourself, your body would have disappeared.

Taking this still further, if you were then to look through a microscope with even more resolution, you would see that the so-called subatomic particles are actually not particles at all; they are concentrations, or as Neils Bohr describes them in the *'Principle of Complementarity'*, waves of energy without definite boundary.

Known as *wu* in Chinese and *kensho* or *satori* in Japanese, this would be to view and be awakened to the cosmic reality that there is no boundary separating one subatomic particle from another.

No boundary separating you from anyone, or anything else.

In other words, from this viewpoint the whole universe is actually a continuous spread of energy or consciousness, without any differentiation.

Your consciousness and divinity can be cultivated with exercises such as [Mindful Breathing](#) and simple [Mindful Living practices](#).

And to help you marshal and prioritise these *big thoughts*, allow yourself to think different and try this wee technique.

I call it the *'3 Buckets Exercise'* and all it requires is a sheet of flip-chart paper, a bold marker pen and some post-it notes. On the flip-chart paper draw 3 buckets and label each in turn — *'Brilliant Basics'*, *'Compelling & Different'*, and *'Game Changers'* — And then use the post-its to capture your *big thoughts* and ideas and place them in the most appropriate bucket. Visual. Simple. Powerful!

- **Go More Than Just 9 Yards**

Cultivate more meaningful chats with acquaintances and colleagues. It's harder over Zoom, or with Teams, but you don't have

the option of staying in the holding pattern of *water-cooler chats*, or *coffee room banter* at the moment— with that all-prevailing, ubiquitous & ephemeral small talk. So starting making every conversation count, by giving others your real attention and take a bit longer to ask what someone did at the weekend, then listen to what they have to say and ask a follow-up question, before offering anything about yourself — Authentic relationships lead to better work and a better life.

Don't settle for second best. Nor should you allow those slings and arrows of outrageous fortune to act as set-backs along your path — Name them friend and treat them as fellow-travelers and buddies in arms.

Don't be overwhelmed, or inhibited, or allow yourself to be shot-down by others — Seek advice rather than feedback, because advice is progressive, forward-looking and interdependent — It's future orientated and uses linguistic constructs like "*I would*" "*You could try*" — Feedback on the other hand can be regressive and independent — Its backward looking and uses linguistics constructs such as "*You did*" "*This happened*" — It focuses on the *felt*, rather than to *feel* or to *find*, which you will discover on your journey is to be *found* by being courageous and doing different.

The poet Robert Browning opined, "*What is a heaven for if a person's reach cannot exceed their grasp*" — So, find your place to stand then make your reach exceed your grasp!

- **Have Overwhelming Heart**

Celebrate the capacity to care and live with kind compassion directed to yourself and to those you meet on a daily basis.

Vulnerability creates stronger connectivity, so embrace your vulnerability, and accept it as part of who you are — There is no better time than now to embrace that *perfect imperfect* You!

The Japanese philosophy of *Wabi-Sabi* is predicated on accepting the beauty of the imperfect, be that a wonky piece of pottery, or crumpled bed-sheets, or *the less than perfect You & Me!*

Learn to be grateful for all you have, rather than mourning what you don't — The American essayist, poet, philosopher, Henry David Thoreau rather nailed-it with these words, "*I am grateful for what I am and have. My thanksgiving is perpetual. It is surprising how contented one can be with just a sense of existence*".

Start keeping a daily [Gratitude Journal](#) — Practice [Mindful Living](#) & [Mindful Breathing](#)!

Be aware of Awareness and make it your intention to pay your full Attention, moment-by-moment-by-moment-by-moment.

And widen your *Circle of Compassion* to, as Albert Einstein wrote, "*Embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its' beauty*".

Compassion is not weakness and to be compassionate is not to be lacking in something. It is a strength and we need to recognise and accept that compassion towards oneself can lead to an increased sense of Happiness and Well-being at multiple levels.

- **Take The View From The Top Of The Tree**

Different perspectives can lead you away from stale assumptions towards deeper and more powerful thinking. So, start practicing *extreme noticing* and rise above things to become singularly effective rather than being plural-y efficient.

The author and leadership guru, Stephen Richards Covey tells a story in his seminal book, '*The 7 Habits of Effective Leaders*' that absolutely nails the difference between being merely efficient and the game-changer that is to Be truly effective, and it goes something like this: "*Imagine a group of wood cutters getting ready to cut down trees in a forest. They could try to cut the trees at a 45-degree angle and this would be a good move. It would allow them to cut trees faster and optimise the task. But what if they were cutting down trees in the wrong forest?*"

Be clear about your starting point — Ask the questions you need to ask to get all the information you need, to act and develop your power to rise above and look further — Don't just settle for what is!

And finally...

- **Steal Back Time**

Pablo Ruiz Picasso famously said, "*An amateur borrows — A genius steals!*"

So be a genius and steal back time!

Many of us endure a time deficit, but so often it can be all of our own making — Allowing the motion and commotion of daily life and the clatter and chatter of this and that, to disassemble and distract and lead us up blind-alleys and down dead-end streets.

But some argue that time is a construct, because with *relativity theory* everything flows — no past, no present, only *the now!*

Well that may be true if we are studying subatomic particles using quantum mechanics; however for all practical purposes in our day-to-day life, time and it's passing is a currency we all trade in — 86,400 seconds of it each and every day — With no reinvesting, stockpiling, rain-checks or returns allowed!

Time on the mortal plane is a hard reality and constant reminder of things passing us by — So, steal back the time to turn your ship around, and there's no better time to do it than now - In the eye of the storm!

Become a *leader leader* in all areas of your life — Accept responsibility — Act with authority — Innovate and exercise judgement — Be trusted and acknowledge the difference, albeit oft-times subtle, between ends and means...And don't let the means become the thing — **You must start with the end in mind!**

### **Touching the Surface**

This is not a rule book for living, nor even a 'How To' guide. In many ways this piece only touches the surface, but it is a **call to action** and simply by working on these 5 areas you can begin to create and craft a *newnormal*.

One where you are front and centre and can *become* fully engaged, connected, empowered — One where you can be a rule-maker, not a rule-taker.

So, find your place to stand as our friend Archimedes suggests and in the words of the late Steve Jobs, "*Be ready to make a dent in the universe*".

### **It's your life after all!**

Apart from being on a mission to spread the #mindfulbutter around the world, I am all about making the complex less complex, the tough stuff not so tough and putting the unreachable within reach of everyone. I am author of '*Uncovering Mindfulness: In Search Of A Life More Meaningful*' available on Amazon and [www.bookboon.com](http://www.bookboon.com); the '*Coffee & A Cup of Mindfulness*' and the '*Mindful Hacks For Mindful Living & Mindful Working*' series. I am also a Contributing Author to [The Huffington Post](http://The Huffington Post) and a Contributing Writer to [Thrive Global](http://Thrive Global). I can be contacted at [paul@themuddpartnership.co.uk](mailto:paul@themuddpartnership.co.uk) and you can follow the continuing journey Uncovering Mindfulness on Twitter [@TheMindfulBook](https://twitter.com/TheMindfulBook) and at [@Paul\\_Mudd](https://twitter.com/Paul_Mudd)

