LIVING IN CHALLENGING TIMES

In January, I planned a five-city summer trip to visit my family on both the West and East Coasts with a solo trip to the Jersey shore. That
is gone now, along with the hopes and dreams of millions of us. I’m in my small apartment, so lucky I don’t have COVID. I’m sad about missing the trip but I’ve been more depressed and deeply troubled by the management of the virus and the suffering of so many who are ill and have died or are without homes or jobs. And I am pessimistic about the way out of this.

I have been a psychotherapist for over 30 years, so of course I’ve tried some of my tried and true stress busters to get thru this time. Some have helped and I have created some new ones that I am passing along to you.

A favorite strategy for me is to take 5 minutes for focused breathing when I wake. I count four deep breaths in through the nose, then breathe out through the mouth. Sometimes the Buddha visits me with a smile when I am finished. I take another 5 minutes before I get out of bed to remember how grateful I am for all I have been given and all that I have. I think of all the women around the world who live in poverty and acknowledge how blessed I am. With these two exercises I begin my day with the state of mind I need to do what needs to be done to take action for myself and others.

I also allow my tough and negative feelings to surface. I have discovered that when I repress them and pretend everything is just fine, I pay the price with stomach pains and feelings of paralysis and impotence. When I let myself feel...
difficult emotions and yell or rip up the newspaper or plan to rid the world of evil with my magic wand, I can laugh and release the anxiety. But, most importantly, I can plan some worthwhile action to make change.

It is OK to have troubling or bad thoughts. I am reminded that tough times do not last. I have just watched some movies about slavery and the world wars. Now those were long horrific times. I am letting myself remember pain and tragedy in my life -- what I did then and how I coped. AND I remind myself that those tough times are over. What are my lessons from those times? All things do pass. And now in this crisis, I know that this hard time will pass too.

Feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope? Seek out help; it really helps. Only a few sessions with a skilled person can let you feel heard and understood. I spent years in therapy before I became a therapist. It worked for me. Therapy helped me accept myself and life the way it is. Only then could I move forward.

One thing I have learned is that staying in the PRESENT works. I stand or stamp my feet and say to myself, “Here I am. This is me. This is now.” I look around. I breathe, and often I feel better - no past to pull me back, no future to worry about. This is now and I can live now. I can do my best.

Some additional tips -- try to get your creative juices flowing. I am learning French online and beading.

**Wisdom Circles Schedule**

While most Wisdom Circles remain temporarily closed due to COVID-19, three groups are offering virtual meetings via the free online video conferencing program Zoom. Give it a try - you can join these Circles from the comfort of your home!

**Flowing Wells Circle**

Wednesday, September 16 at 10:30 am | Held via Zoom

To register, please email the facilitator Judy Francis at judyfrancisaz@gmail.com.

**St. Francis Circle**

Friday, September 11 at 10 am | Held via Zoom

Please send an email to the facilitator Deb Knox at dlkcoach@gmail.com to register.

**LGBTQI Elder Support Group**

Every other Saturday at 1:00 pm September 5 & 19 | Held via Zoom

Open and welcoming forum to discuss the experience of aging in the LGBTQI+ community, hosted by Southern Arizona Senior Pride. For more info, please email Claire Ellington at cb62xx@gmail.com.
Once a week I write a note I send or just keep to someone I am grateful to for their presence in my life. And I am practicing some self-care and kindness to myself. Chocolate and a bubble bath really help. More than anything TAKE ACTION. Send money to the food bank, to Doctors Without Borders, look after your neighbors, call your family, or join a Wisdom Circle to talk with and learn from others. You will feel better and be better.

~Ellie Starer

Ellie Starer is a psychotherapist, a grandma, and one of the founding members of the Wisdom Circles Council. Learn more about her in our feature "Meet Ellie Starer" in this newsletter.

Energize your day by joining Tucson-based iamHeart (Institute for Applied Meditation on the Heart) for their 20-minute online meditation sessions. All you need is a computer or mobile device and a comfortable chair. No registration or video conferencing software required - the live videos stream directly from your browser.

iamHeart is a meditation school whose work focuses on Heart Rhythm Meditation - a method of breathing that coordinates the body's respiratory, circulation and nervous systems in a state of coherence that results in an integration of one's soul, heart, mind and body.

Class Schedule:
Monday - Friday | 9 am AZ time

Please click here to learn more and access the sessions.

Can't make it live? Each daily video will continue to be available for one week after the live session ends.

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What's your story?

WEEKLY CHAIR YOGA VIA ZOOM

Interested in starting a regular chair yoga practice? Join Tucson-based yoga instructor Bonnie Golden for a holistic and accessible yoga practice for all. Chair Yoga is for those who would like a mostly sitting practice of yoga stretches, breathwork and meditation introduction. Sessions are currently held via
Do you find your memories of the past being triggered by the simplest of little events? With so much time on my hands, I find my memory bank beginning to be flooded. Recently, I watched a movie on TV that brought home a significant period in my life, where the memories were sketchy at best. But the movie brought to life the deep emotions experienced during that tumultuous time and the memories poured forth. I have felt more alive and awake since that movie viewing and it has affected other areas of my life as well.

Perhaps it’s the extra time available as a result of stay-at-home orders or recommendations, which hopefully we all have been following within our own parameters. Making the most of the time you have available may or may not be a priority, but if you have time you might consider capturing some of these moments - from the past or the present that occur to you in random fashion. “Writing your way home” offers you a means of re-calling and collecting memories not only of your ancient past, but also this irretrievable present.

I’m especially fascinated these days by the stories of people who in their 90s can re-call many of the events of the past century as if they were yesterday. What do they have to tell us? If they could survive not one, but two World Wars; a pandemic; a polio epidemic; and the Vietnam war, surely their stories can help us deal with sheltering in place - no matter how challenging it may be. What would you like to share?

**MUSINGS OF AN 87-YEAR-OLD**

I believe I should start with a confession: I like being in charge. That doesn’t mean I’m not happy unless I’m in the leader’s chair. It means that I need to come from a position of knowing myself. Then, no matter what I’m dealing with, I know how I must handle myself. After 87 years of living, here’s what I know about myself:

- I’m an extrovert. I need engagement with people.
- It’s important to me that John, my family and my friends know I love them. I will make every effort to maintain close relationships with them.
- Each day presents an opportunity to be grateful.
- I feel joy when I can use whatever skill I have to help others.
- I need to feel hopeful.
- I like knowing I am flesh and bone and spiritual.
- Natural beauty lifts my spirit.

Zoom every Wednesday, 10:00-11:00 am. $9 per class.

Please click [here](#) to sign up. Zoom link provided upon registration.

To learn more about Bonnie, please visit her [website](#).
One of the recent fun prompts for my writing group was "Tell us the story of your name; how and why you have that name and the story of your being born." Yes, everyone has a story to tell, and that story is in a context of time and place, that is in your memory and seeking an outlet. Since there is not a lot of stimulation in the present time, calling upon more significant periods of our lives that are rich with emotion can bring you to that place called home.

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If you are interested in a more extensive exploration of your life story - perhaps just for your pleasure or to share with your family, I invite you to join my writing group “Crafting Your Spiritual Autobiography” to capture significant life events. We consider those events “spiritual” but probably not religious - because of the meaning and value they offer us and other eager listeners. Only you can determine the meaning and value of your life experience. And you may not appreciate it until you write it down so others can learn from it. Dates for the next group: Thursday, September 24, October 8 and 22, November 5 and 19, December 3, 2020, 1:30 - 3:30 pm, via Zoom. To register, please email me at dlkcoach@gmail.com or call (520) 780-3834.

~Deb Knox

Deborah Knox is a Life Transitions Coach and facilitates the St. Francis in the Foothills Wisdom Circle. Please see our September Wisdom Circles schedule for upcoming dates and registration info. To learn more about her coaching work, visit www.lifeworktransitions.com.

- I’m happiest when I have a project to work on.
- I am deliberate about laughter.

As long as I’m in charge of myself, I can find contentment and deal with challenges. Someday my body or my brain will fail and I’ll need to pass control to someone else. Let’s hope it doesn’t take a jackhammer.

~Fran Marian

When you walk out of this storm, you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm is all about.

~ Haruki Murakami