

Calming Down in These Times and Finding Direction

By Tama Kieves

Oh, my goodness, what a time to be alive! I know that you may be dealing with fear, sadness or frustration. I am holding you in my heart. I really am. I'm also holding you in my knowing. I know that *you were born for these times*. You will have the strength, wonder, and unfoldment of circumstances that you need. Here's some vitamins and toilet paper for your bunker, too.

Social Distance Yourself from Negativity

The CDC urges social distancing—standing 6 feet apart from others. I suggest 6 lifetimes apart from those who spread terror. *Fear is a contagion*. If I coughed in your face, you wouldn't just stand there. Why allow the media or a co-worker to spew negativity at you? Step back. Let's work together to diminish unnecessary fear. **I am asking you to stop focusing on the problems. You are now called on to be part of the solution.**

We all want to stay “informed.” But know this: you are part of the information. Your attitude. Your beliefs. Your choices. Yes, know what you need to know. Yes, wash your hands. But wash your mind, too. Where did you get infected? Where did you lose your balance? Pay attention. *Be part of the contagion of love.*

Right now, as you're reading this: think of one person, pet, or circumstance that makes you happy. Take a deep breath and breathe that happiness in. Notice how one thought of love can make a difference in how you feel. A fearful thought has the opposite effect. *A Course in Miracles* teaches that one negative thought is “a detour into hell.” But you knew that.

A Possibility to Calm Us Down

Like everyone else, I am concerned. Some days, I'm a half an inch shy of chewing off every fingernail, writing my will, or stockpiling Fancy Feast cat food—and not just for my cat. So, given that I have an adorable anxious predisposition, I remind myself that I really do not know anything. And that when I'm fear, I know even less.

But I do know this: I know that we will not be here forever.

There is always a breakthrough. There is always a path that emerges. I know from working with creativity, that a shift always arises. As a writer, I often get stuck, can't find the flow. I feel cornered. I pressure myself to "produce" and that takes the oxygen out of my pen and out of the room. But when I show up with love, patience, and non-judgment, something comes out of the blue. Something out of this world comes into my world. *It always happens.* I call it love. Or awakening. Or fulfillment of a promise. You can call it what you like.

The phenomenon of inspiration isn't limited just to writers. Scientists and engineers experience epiphanies. Athletes break records, statistics, and take us beyond the world we thought was real. Organizations experience breakthroughs, create better products, services, and systems. Leaders illuminate a new possibility and galvanize change. It's the way of creative evolution. Necessity is the mother of invention. And Picasso says, "Every act of creativity begins with an act of destruction."

The media often focuses on the potential for devastation. But it's just half of the story. There is a potential for revelation and innovation, brought on by the challenges.

Just as a virus can infect a population, so can good ideas and hope. And solidarity and ingenuity.

Smallpox and polio were unsolvable problems once. There was a time before the internet. Before electricity, space travel and medicine. So much awaits our discovery. Everyone in this world is capable of loving and represents enormous potential. We've barely scratched the surface on what the human spirit can do.

For Now, Stay in the Moment

There is no other reality. Your mind may spin ahead with future implications or possibilities. But right now, you are safe. *All is well* . Notice the sounds in this moment. Your child in the pantry, the birds chirping. This is a holy moment. Don't miss it. Don't allow yourself to disappear into negative fantasy. You do not know the course of this transformation. This can be a defining moment. Who do you want to show up as? Fear speaks first and loudly. But it doesn't mean that the noisiest bully is intelligent. It's normal to have discomfort. Yet you have a stillness below your fears. A love. A power.

When my mind begins catastrophizing, painting negative future scenarios *and believing them*, I discipline myself to anchor in the present. I commit to not taking on my whole life all at once. I create a border of time, of permission, a no-major-decision-making-zone, so that I can just be here, breathe, and uncover insight and clarity as it becomes available. Maybe the segment of time is for the next two weeks or month. Maybe it's for three years. Or three minutes. Whatever feels right. When a puppy is frightened, you might kennel it in a crate. The big new life is too overwhelming. I suggest you consider crating your mind. It's better than cratering to fear.

Take a Break and Have a Breakthrough

I know some of you might be working harder than ever, and I bless you medical professionals and first responders. But for the rest of you, what if I told you, you had a BREAK from everyday life for a few weeks? If you weren't afraid, you might enjoy it. *You could enjoy it*. Hey, why not enjoy it? You're here either way. What if you just decided that you weren't going to make any major decisions out of fear right now? That you would let things settle down. This isn't your whole life. This is a snapshot in time. Put a border around it. Let this be a garden. Tend to *this* garden.

This isn't about waiting this out. This is the opportunity to do some of the things you've always wanted or *needed* to do—including rest. You may be very busy again when this time ends. So why not use this window to strengthen, connect, rejuvenate, or rediscover

yourself?

If you're in fear right now, remember this:

Doing what you love—or expressing love-- changes your brain chemistry. Yes, god forbid, it's joyous. It's also as responsible as washing your hands.

Because love reminds you of who you are when you're in your strength. And that opens up a whole new world.

So, you could: Write your book, song, manifesto. Send love letters and tell others how much you cherish them. Call people you've wanted to catch up with—learn about who they are now. Clean out your closet, junk drawer, or psyche. Start baking. Play board games with your children. Help a neighbor, form a community group, get political. Forgive someone. Forgive yourself. Use your talents to diminish the difficulties of others. Take an online course. Meditate. Deepen your spirituality, religion, or anything that connects you to your well-being. Hike. Play frisbee with your dog. Have social contact with your dog. (Hey, or read a copy of that great book with self-coaching *Thriving Through Uncertainty*, (my latest) which I wrote before any of this happened.)

Trust the Process

I once did a shamanic journey where I was led to get into a blue canoe and lay down in it. I was told *the canoe knows where to take you*. Let go. Let the blue canoe take you. This may be the message of this time. It's not about fighting this time. *The journey knows the way. The journey is a presence. The journey has intelligence. The journey is not happenstance*. This challenges those of us who need to nail things down. Yet conscious letting go is not apathy. It's perspective. It's the wisdom to know there is an aliveness in this universe that is beyond the small self. Try it on. Imagine that things will somehow work out and even serve you in the end. This doesn't deaden your motivation. Fear is not the only motivation. This could be the great adventure or experiment of this time. If it helps, lean into this line from *A Course In Miracles*: "What could you not accept if you but knew that everything that happens, all events, past, present and to come, are gently planned by One Whose only

purpose is your good?”

Maybe you think you don't know how to trust. But you do. It's your birthright. You know how to fly. And it's time.

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