

My mind swims clumsily, entangled in the last few moments of a fitful sleep. I open my eyes, my heart racing and I wait for the light to win over the darkness. It takes me a moment to separate the blurred images of hospitals, ventilators, and exhausted medical staff in my mind from the reality of my safe bedroom.

I shake off the insidious themes of death and oppressive feelings of drowning that have been invading my dreams; they fall to the floor and shatter as I rise to start my day. I have learned that I must be careful to step around these slivers as I go about my routine; they are sharp, painful, and cause bleeding. I see the dog and cat still sleeping peacefully and find solace in their oblivion.

I pad down the stairs to the kitchen and prepare a cup of coffee. Immersing myself in my senses helps maintain the cloak of protection around my soul, and I know I will absorb the drink's warmth and calmness.

I turn on the TV and immediately change the channel. I had decided only yesterday that keeping abreast of the news has been penetrating the barrier of physical and emotional health that I have been so carefully knitting with the soft, gentle yarn of self-care. I settle on watching an engaging documentary.

The coffee is ready. I watch the cream pool gracefully at the bottom of the cup as I drizzle the thinnest stream. These days, I am easily mesmerized by things that entice the senses, such as the gradually changing colors as I slowly do the same with the coffee. The first sip unlocks the stillness that was hidden beneath yesterday's turbulent emotions, and I float on the smooth sea of coffee and hazelnut.

The dog approaches me, expecting the usual morning walk. I oblige, and once outside I tilt my head upwards to absorb the warmth of the sun; it travels smoothly through my skin into my bloodstream, healing vibes on a journey to my heart and mind. I feel the last harrowing effect of my restless night evaporating.

I think of how I look forward to my hours working and am Immensely grateful to have the opportunity to do so while many have lost their jobs. Tasks and projects occupy my mind, temporarily providing relief from the acknowledgement of pain that so many are experiencing. Today is Sunday, so I must focus on my life bowl, which I fill with things of comfort and consume during waking hours to provide protection during the night. When I see my nutrition draining and the bottom of the bowl becoming visible, I am careful to replenish it.

I know that we will not escape this unscathed. I also know that we as an organization are fiercely strong. Patrons are searching for some sense of normalcy, and we offer as much as we are able.

There is quiet strength in self-preservation. Take care of yourselves while serving others.