

A Time for Deepening

By Anne Wennhold

I don't know about you but I've been overloaded, *inundated* is more like it, with well meaning messages about how to cope with the coronavirus' imposition upon life. The tsunami of writings, programs, uplifting poems or heartfelt prayers is overwhelming! And tiring!

OK. I don't mean every single email that comes in for I love the thoughtfulness of those who send music to listen to or information like the Metropolitan Opera free streaming online, or a list of local take outs. And I really do appreciate the *desire* others have to maintain a sense of connection in time of isolation. For me, actually spending time with such attempted connections became not only overkill but resulted in the opposite. It separated me from myself, *isolating* me still further! How ironic is that? By looking to others I forgot to look into myself.

At the beginning of the crisis, I confess to signing up for an online program by a famous spiritual teacher with a medical background. I thought it wise to learn new creative ways to enhance the mandated isolation. But while waiting for the first segment of the program to arrive I realized I didn't want to hear any more information on "how to" manage my life from anyone. If anything, what I would like to hear from the teachers, leaders and guides is how *they* are coping with the chaos of our time rather than to tell me how to do it, and to hear how *they* are dealing with their own human concerns like fear, panic, boredom and restlessness at being confined.

So I will share my central coping strategy. This one is about making a daily date with the Universal Energy I call Creator Within. The purpose is to open the channels of inner wisdom that are ready to support navigation along life's path and through difficulties like the current mandated isolation. Going into the meditation room I begin with lighting a candle, smudging and sitting at the altar. Out loud I invite in my power animals, ancestors and spirits to be present and supportive. Then I open my Virtual Doorway to Inner Being with these magical words that come from the poet Rumi.

'There is a *way between voice and presence*

Where information flows.

In disciplined silence it opens,

In wandering talk it closes.

After entering Sacred Space with those words, I sit in silence to open to the flow Rumi speaks about. It takes 10 minutes more or less before my mind starts to slow, muscles relax and body opens into stillness. Then I wait to see what wants to come forth. Sometimes drumming feels right. Sometimes I have a specific intention like asking for help with a topic for an article. Other times prayer for another person or situation is called for. There are times when instead of asking for help with this or that project, attitude, purpose or need, the intention is to listen. "I am here to listen. Tell me what I need to know or do to be

One day as I just sat and listened there came a response telling me to ask myself what it is that's enlivening for me? As I reflected on the suggestion I found that qualities of being were more enlivening than objects or specific activities: *spontaneity* was the first word that came up, then *variety*, *creativity* and finally *learning*. OK. Here was a recipe for how to be more present during my at home stay: *creating a variety* of new soup recipes, *learning* and *creating* new online possibilities (Zoom) and

spontaneously laughing at the online antics of animals being their natural selves. All things I'd done before but now with a reset on perspective and a new awareness about how to be more present in the Now!

Sometimes I access one of the systems I've studied: shamanic journeying, Akashic records practice, or contemplative prayer. But simple basic reflection is one of the more powerful tools I use because it does not need any manual or 'how to' training. The ancestors joined in the other day when I reflected on the question of what other times in my life have felt as scary as this one. How did I manage then? The memories of using multimedia art materials for creating emotional release came to life and reminded me again to use *various* ways of *creating* as a coping skill.

Not all these sessions of Going Within provide the answers I want when I want them. Not all sessions make fears, panic or boredom go away. They too are a part of being human and need acknowledgement as in 'Oh here you are again, Oh Mighty Panic!' or "You, Boredom, you are toying with me again!" When these energies persist I sit with them awhile and even drum with them until they are willing to go away.

Ending the session, I send prayers for family, friends, the earth, our leaders and all who are in suffering. I thank the spirits and close Rumi's Virtual Door by noting aloud the time for silence has ended. Blowing out the candle I return to three dimensional reality, now ready from a place of grounding and recalibration, to choose only those connections that will nourish me.

Some days are better than others. Some sessions are better than others and sometimes the best I can do is just light the candle and drum. That is reality. But as long as there is daily connection with my inner self, I see a long term deepening of spirit, flexibility to renegotiate the path and a growing ability to establish meaningful connections with others.

The coronavirus has gifted our entire planet with a pause in time to reflect on our relationship with All That Is. Will we use this time to consider how we can move forward together, acknowledge the needs of the earth and honor them as we do our own? The first step is for each of us to ground within our own selves then move out to connect deeply and meaningfully to all our relations for the future good of all.

May it be so.

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