



A Self-Empowered look at the Crisis

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It's a frightening time. We're in the midst of a worldwide pandemic, with cities and even entire countries shutting down. Some of us are in areas that have already been affected by Coronavirus disease 2019. Others are bracing for what may come. And all of us are watching the headlines and wondering, "What is going to happen next?"

For many people, the uncertainty surrounding Coronavirus is the hardest thing to handle. We don't know exactly how we'll be impacted, or how bad things might get. And that makes it all too easy to fear catastrophe and spiral out into overwhelming dread and panic. But there are many things you can do—even in the face of this unique crisis—to manage your anxiety and fears.

What is Coronavirus disease 2019 ("COVID-19")?

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China. Some patients have pneumonia in both lungs, multi-organ failure and in some cases death.

COVID-19 is a type of coronavirus — a family of viruses that can cause illnesses such as the common cold, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). The current coronavirus outbreak has intensified worldwide. Public health officials, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have urged the public to practice social distancing to limit spread of the virus. As the number of cases has grown, certain groups have been asked to also self-quarantine and self-isolate.

What can I do to avoid becoming ill?

Take control.

Self-empowerment in its simplest form means taking charge of your own life through the decisions you make every day. It means not giving away your power by allowing anything or anyone to make decisions for you.

We all have the power within us. The only difference between those who own their personal power and use it appropriately, and those who don't, is their core belief. If you believe you have the power to take actions for yourself, you will do so. If deep down, you question this, you will hesitate and the decision will be made for you.

Imagine the virus as two track athletes. In lane 1 there are hurdles that the sprinter must overcome. In lane 2, the sprinter faces no hurdles. Now imagine yourself at the finish line. You give the signal and both athletes race toward you. In a strange twist, you have to now fight one of these athletes. The good news is you can choose which of the two you must fight.



Question: Do you fight the fresh sprinter that barely broke a sweat racing towards you, or do fight the sprinter that is nearly exhausted from the hurdle jumps? If you are like most, you choose the weaker of the two sprinters. Ordinarily, you would fight by whipping out a can of mace (or, in this case, a vaccine) and that would end the threat. However, the mace does not have any effect on the sprinter and your best course of action is to fight with the hurdles you placed in the sprinter's path.



“Whether you think you can, or you think you can't—you're right.” — Henry Ford

Empowerment-

Focus on the things you can control. We're in a time of massive upheaval. There are so many things outside of our control, including how long the pandemic lasts, how other people behave, and what's going to happen in our communities. That's a tough thing to accept, and so many of us respond by endlessly searching the Internet for answers and thinking over all the different scenarios that might happen. But as long as we're focusing on questions with unknowable answers, and circumstances outside of our personal control, this strategy will get us nowhere—aside from feeling drained, anxious and overwhelmed.

When you feel yourself getting caught up in fear of what might happen, try to shift your focus to things you can control. For example, you can't control how severe the Coronavirus outbreak is in your city or town, but you can take steps to reduce your own personal risk, and the risk that you'll unknowingly spread it to others.

Self-Empowerment hurdles that reduce exposure and weaken the virus:

1. Avoid large events and mass gatherings. 
-  2. Avoid close contact (about 6 feet) with anyone who is sick or has symptoms.
-  3. Keep distance between yourself and others if COVID-19 is spreading in your community, especially if you have a higher risk of serious illness.
-  4. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
-  5. Kick Back and Relax. Some stress can be a good thing. It helps your body get ready for a challenge. But if it lasts too long, that's bad news. Studies show it can weaken your body's defense system. Avoid it when you can. Make it a point to unwind and do things you enjoy.
-  6. Eat the Rainbow. Colorful fruits and vegetables are full of antioxidants. These nutrients guard against free radicals, molecules that can harm your cells. To get a wide range, go for oranges, green peppers, broccoli, kiwi, strawberries, carrots, watermelon, papaya, leafy greens, and cantaloupe.
-  7. Get a Good Night's Sleep. Without it, your immune system won't have the strength it needs to fight off illness. Most adults need about 7 to 9 hours of sleep a night. To get better shut-eye, you need to stick to a regular bedtime schedule, stay active during the day, skip caffeine and booze near bedtime, keep the bedroom cool, and give yourself time to unwind at the end of the day.
-  8. Cut Back on the Booze. Alcohol plays a major role in how we socialize and

celebrate. But too much can weaken your defenses and cause you to get sick more often. How much is too much? Everyone is different. Listen to your body.



9. Exercise is a simple way to rev up your defense system. It can also ease stress and heart disease, and certain types of cancer. You'll get the most bang for your workout buck if you do about half an hour a day. It doesn't have to be hard-core. Any type of movement can help.



10. Have a Laugh. A giggle or two is good for you. Not only does it make you feel better, there's no downside. One study found that after people laughed out loud at funny videos, their immune systems worked better.



11. Consider Herbs and Vitamin Supplements. Some of these products can help your immune system. Because they can interact with other medicines, let your doctor know if you want to try them. He can help you decide which ones are safe for you.



12. Kick the Smoking, Vaping Habit. Do your immune system a favor and give up smoking. Covid-19 is a respiratory illness. It targets the lungs. Keeping your lungs healthy offers the best chance of prevention and recovery. Stay away from secondhand smoke, too.

We, as a nation, have been held up by the world as a beacon of hope. That is because We, the people of this nation, pull together during times of adversity and crisis to overcome insurmountable odds. This is who we are, and this is what we do. From 13 tiny colonies to the world's single superpower. This is the American way.

Over the next several months, we will face one of our biggest challenges to date. The enemy we face is no respecter of person, class or position. This enemy seeks to destroy everything we hold dearly. The enemy is relentless, resourceful and is without remorse. When battling such an enemy, fear is a luxury we cannot afford. Fear clouds our judgement, weakens our resolve and depletes our energy. We must empower ourselves to become part of the solution or face being part of the problem.



Real fear (crippling fear) can be more contagious than the enemy we face. This is not about being fearless, rather it is about not being controlled by fear. My grandfather was a German farmer (I know, I do not look German; more like a German chocolate cake), but he used to say that common sense is the first thing to go during a crisis. Making decisions out of fear instead of common sense is a recipe for disaster.

Our forefathers did not have the technological amenities we have today. Yet, with a feather quill ink pen, parchment paper and some common sense, they created the framework for the most advanced, wealthiest and most powerful nation the world has ever known.

It's that time again America. The entire world looks to us because we look like the entire world. We are going to do like we've always done. Combine our diverse strengths and develop a unified solution.

America has the United States, and each state is made up of cities and towns. These cities and towns are made up of communities. These communities are made up of neighbors. These neighbors are made up of families, and these families are made up of people like you. This is how it works.

As Americans we have two tasks, 1) Find our role, 2) Do our part.

It's time to roll because, because "This is how we do it."

"Courage is the most important of all the virtues because without courage, you can't practice any other virtue consistently."

— Maya Angelou



**Side Note:
Hoarding is not Self-Empowerment....**

As fears of the novel corona-virus continue to rise, people are hitting the stores to stock up on essentials like toilet paper, canned food, soap and hand sanitizer. While panic is a “very human” response, it’s neither helpful nor proportionate to the current risk level.

I put together items needed to make your own personal protective equipment (see website links) from local dollar stores. As a Safety professional, I view store items through the lens of safety factors. I was astonished to see that the items that would benefit a safety kit were in full stock while items with little or no safety value were nowhere to be found.

I get it, when people feel uncertain, they tend to focus on things that bring them certainty. Most of us don’t have the ability to make new vaccines or enact new policies, but the one action that we can control, that feels like we are doing something, is to stock up on supplies.

This is not new. Panic-buying happened during earlier pandemics. It happened after 9/11. It happens in advance of hurricanes along the Atlantic coast. It’s a natural response to a stressful experience. But the coronavirus is new. It’s mechanisms and lethality are not fully understood. With hurricanes, people know what they’re in for, and for how long. They’ve been through them before. And survived. With this, we don’t yet know the boundaries, we have no frame of reference. That just amplifies the fear.

The reality is that we really don’t know what we really need. If it is discovered that ketchup cures the coronavirus and you spend your money on toilet paper, you may regret that purchase. Common sense dictates that you purchase the items that your household uses the most. Buying food that your family does not or will not eat is not the best way to prepare. It is better to be frugal with items that you use than to stock up on items that you won’t use. Save your money now to purchase the items you will need later.