

Getting through . . . ? ? ? OR Getting TO . . .

Where are you?

Whether we're dealing with a number of inconveniences, or the loss of a beloved family member, or the loss of income, our first reaction may be to sort of "hunker down" and try to "get through it."

This article is an invitation to explore a different response. It specifically invites you to reflect on what you consider your "former normal." And ~ it invites you to reflect on your deep values, access your highest vision ~ and to let your imagination loose to envision a "new normal!"

If you are thinking you want to "get back to normal," what do you have in mind?

Are you thinking about the folks who are homeless? Are you thinking about the farm workers on whom we depend, but who have no health insurance? Are you thinking of the number of children for whom school lunches are the only food they have each day? Are you thinking of the gender gap in pay? Are you visualizing the children working in cobalt mines in the Democratic Republic of the Congo so we can have our favorite electronics? Or the children, who don't get enough to eat themselves, picking cocoa beans that go into our M & Ms?

Oh, probably not. Well, the truth is that each of these situations and many others like them are part of our "former normal."

Maybe what you miss most about your "former normal" is the freedom to come and go as you like. We are isolated. And we don't like it! For us introverts, it may be fine, for awhile. But then, I find I really want to have my next door neighbor over for coffee. I want to gather my friends together for a potluck. I want to travel to another state to see my son.

Yet, we have been "existing" in a global community in which isolation was common. We were isolated – or isolated ourselves - from those who have different political views, or embrace different spiritual traditions. I isolate myself from my geographic community (my next-door neighborhood) because I am "too busy." I have a long commute to my workplace and I don't have time to stop and chat. I also isolate myself from the governance of my life – because I am "too busy" to run for the school board, or a city council seat. I isolate myself from cultures in other countries because I feel overwhelmed by my own daily obligations.

So, if our “former normal” wasn’t really the kind of world we desire, **what is the “normal” you long for?** Can you . . . **do you dare** imagine a world where everyone has enough food to eat? Where everyone has access to the health care they need? Where everyone has an opportunity for a job? Oh, you think this is the some impossible dream? ? ? That we should “dumb these down” some? What would you “settle for?”

It appears that the coronavirus has provided for us an opportunity to “think outside the box,” as they say.

Yes, This is a Fertile Time!

In a 1993 edition of *The Systems Thinker*, Daniel Kim, co-founder of Pegasus Communications and co-founder of the MIT Center for Organizational Learning, describes what he calls four levels of understanding from which to view the world. This may be useful to us as we consider the world as we would like it to be.

The first level of understanding, he calls the “events” view. **Events** are those individual things we experience: we write a report, send an email to a colleague, watch a movie, eat lunch, brush our teeth, ride our bike.

The next level, Kim calls **Pattern of Events**. This view is different, because we can discern trends. If you rode your exercise bike yesterday, that would be an “event.” If you ride your exercise bike three days a week, or every day, that is a “pattern.”

The third level of understanding, Kim calls **Systemic Structures**. Basically at this point we are thinking about what prompted that particular pattern. Perhaps your clothing was feeling “too tight” and you wanted to lose some weight. Or perhaps your physician suggested you would feel better if you got more exercise. Or maybe you expect to take a long hike during your vacation and you need to strengthen your muscles. At this point we can begin to see that these higher level views are higher leverage. Visualizing yourself as slim and trim, or as robustly healthy, or enjoying that hike - - - these are motivators.

The last level of understanding Kim describes he calls **Shared Vision**. In this case, as an individual, you would be thinking “What kind of person do I want to be?” It is here that we have the highest leverage in terms of the action we might take. If you want to be a healthy, active person, you will put structures in place that will prompt you to do things that will lead to that. If you want to influence the future to be the kind of world you truly desire, you will think deeply about what is most important to you. What are your most important values? You also will seek out others who share a vision similar to yours.

Reflecting on what values are most important to you, and generating a vision of the kind of world you want to help create is vital, high leverage work. These will influence how you spend your time, how you spend your money, who you vote for, what you read and study, what groups and individuals you seek out to befriend and engage.

When children in my culture are taught how to cross the street safely, they are told to:

STOP
LOOK
LISTEN

The coronavirus has stopped us!

The looking and the listening is up to us.

If we feel stumped when we try to envision the reality we truly want, let's look and listen in different places than our "normal" newspaper and TV news and talk shows. One of those places may be to listen to our inner voice. There are thousands of "voices" in the world eager to tell us that to think, and what to want, but what does your inner voice have to say? No, this is not a spooky, kooky suggestion. It is just a reminder that when there is less "noise" in our world, when there is less "default-rush" to the next thing on our schedule, we can actually be quiet and listen to our inner voice.

In fact, some would go so far as to suggest that while we have been developing our external technology – our use of machines, computers, accumulating facts and quantifying everything ~ we've neglected developing our inner technology – kindness, empathy, gratitude, wonder, intention, grace, integrity, courage. Would you want to include any of these in your vision of the kind of world you desire?

What about the larger global world? How do you envision it? Again, it may be useful to look and listen in a place where you may not have been before. Jeff Vander Clute, speaker, author, coach, is described by one client as "creating a brand new context for living right now." On his web site, he articulates 5 characteristics of what he see as a "true economy:"

- Activities that benefit all and harm none are naturally supported.
- People and communities have immense freedom to develop their creativity.
- Human communities and ecosystems are uplifted by economic activity.
- Businesses prosper without compromising the web of life.
- People have realized their true nature.

<https://jeffvanderclute.com/articles/a-call-to-co-create-true-economy-part-1/>

The treasure chest we have not yet unlocked – is how to create a global culture that is both diverse and inclusive. Perhaps this is the opportunity coronavirus has brought to us. After all, coronavirus has affected countries around the world. It has highlighted for ALL of us the inescapable fact that

We are a global culture!

whether we want that or not.

Being isolated doesn't mean we are less interdependent. If there is one primary thing the coronavirus has illustrated in an unbelievably clear way, it is that we are interdependent.

It is not only people in Italy, or New York City who are infected, and dying, of this virus. It is not only the economy of the United States that has imploded. In fact, we are now being warned that as we begin to "open up" again, even when the virus in one area is under control, it is likely to spread back from another area of the world.

Authors Brian Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker, in their book, *Journey of the Universe* articulate this vision that may inform our vision of "**getting TO . . .**"

" Our role is to provide the hands and hearts that will enable the universe's energies to come forth in a new order of well-being." They speak of a planetary civilization that is "both culturally diverse, and locally vibrant." (p. 117)

This is a Fertile Time!

May we use this opportunity well to clearly envision and begin to create together "a new order of well-being."

May we nurture a new consciousness of ourselves and the reality we are

Getting TO . . .