

This Pandemic Is a Lesson in Patience

by Dennis Payton Knight

Going into March of 2020, we had been hearing over two months from some news channels of an approaching epidemic, a wildly contagious, killer virus coming out of China and then Korea. Their increasingly urgent reporting then led to news from a competing channel that it was all either a hoax or nothing to worry about.

As we got well into March, over a period of about three days, we realized it was a pandemic and we were in its midst. That moment, for me, was March 11. It was the day the Windsor Gardens board of directors, on which I serve, after a hastily called but long, serious meeting, closed our recreation facilities, including the golf course, swimming pool and fitness center. We shuttered the clubhouse and canceled all scheduled meetings and activities, including a much-anticipated concert the next day.

The stock market crashed and a run on toilet paper and Clorox spread across the country. School districts closed with children told to distance-learn at home using whatever technology a family could muster. Movie theaters, clothing stores, salons and restaurants closed. Basketball, hockey, soccer, and then baseball games were canceled.

The loss of life worldwide has been tremendous, and our own Windsor Gardens community of some 3,600 at-risk senior adults has not been spared, with one life lost and nine people contracting the virus. It is an infection rate of one quarter of one percent, and we are fighting to keep it there.

Months into the crisis, adults and children around the globe are experiencing and making history, the stuff of legend for future generations. We have seen our slowly built retirement nest eggs drop wildly overnight and experienced unfamiliar concerns about access to bread and butter, bacon, and eggs. And toilet paper.

But we have also learned early the value of social distancing, washing our hands and constant cleaning of common touch surfaces. We have kept the grocery and, yes, liquor stores running as being essential, but have done without salons and dining in restaurants. We wear masks everywhere beyond our own front door, and we have managed to stay connected to each other with the marvels of electronics.

But most of all, we have learned in this pandemic the virtue of patience. Patience is a blessing to the stressed, and it puts urgency in perspective. I came to realize that philosophical nugget this morning after having put off for days, with no excuse and none needed, the composition of this very essay on the lessons of the Coronavirus. Why hurry?

I said it this way to a fellow member of my writing group: "One of the things I have learned from the pandemic," I told her, "is that having all this time on my hands is flattening, not so much the curve of the infection rate, as it is to the curve of my motivation."

And now I will empty the crumb tray on my toaster.