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Dear Friends,

The current Coronavirus pandemic is revealing a lot about how intertwined we are as people on this planet (literally, as the disease spreads), and unfortunately, it is also revealing how little some of us care about those points of connection. From the hoarding of supplies to the "I won't get sick, so I'm going to continue on with my daily life" attitude without regard for more vulnerable populations, some of us are failing at our responsibilities to other human beings in the midst of all this. Let's not let this virus kill our capacity for compassion.

How can we experience both social distancing and deeper social compassion at the same time? First, by being intentional about it.

- Call an older neighbor. Ask if they need help stocking their pantry. They may be hesitant to go to the grocery store.
- Buy a gift certificate to use later from small businesses or restaurants you frequent, to help with their cash flow issues as business dries up over these next few weeks.
- As much as possible, self-quarantine. Stay home when you can.
- Give a cash donation to a local food bank so they can keep their shelves stocked. This is especially important for children who may be relying on school lunches as their main meal of the day. When schools close, they go hungry.
- Ask your schools, workplaces, and places of worship for their COVID-19 plans.
- Cancel travel whenever possible.

- Rest and hydrate yourself.
- Stay connected with others via telephone, text, email, and other electronic means.
- Play shared games like "Words with Friends" that you can enjoy with friends from a distance.
- Check-in on your friends and family with a short hello every few days.
- Create a pile of interesting books to read during your self-quarantine.
- Ask for help.

Do whatever it takes to keep compassion alive in a world that has turned upside down. Don't let the coronavirus kill our connections to one another. We need each other now more than ever.

Things you could do in the time of coronavirus **by Jen Lemen**

Writer and teacher [Jen Lemen](#) wrote a list of things we can do during this time that I just loved. I asked her permission to share it here, and I encourage you to read her list as well as [follow Jen's amazing work here](#).

1. Go next door and say, If you need anything, I'm here, just call.
2. Put your feet on the earth and breathe one really deep breath.
3. Tip outrageously if you're out and about. Say this is for the tips I know you're missing right now.
4. Ask to speak to the owner of any local shop and say, How is it going? And then listen.
5. Call your hairdresser if you're not coming in like usual. Ask how they are doing. Send your tip or the cost of your haircut via Venmo.
6. Smile at babies. They must be wondering about all the worried faces.
7. Call your local Black Lives Matter chapter. Ask where you can bring supplies or cash for mutual aid efforts.
8. Research "mutual aid." Get familiar with the term. Imagine living it.
9. Go to bed early.
10. Bathe your body like it's a temple. Put on lotion like it's a temple.
11. Call an old person.
12. Check on a friend with cancer. Listen as long as they'll talk.
13. Remember this new careful-about-germs reality is a familiar daily nightmare for so many people.

14. Reach out to friends of Asian descent. Stigma and racism and lashing out are up for our friends from these communities. Say, I appreciate you and I'm here if you need anything.
15. Stay home. Meditate. Breathe deep deep deep. Exhale.
16. Organize the cabinets. Realize there's more here than you realized.
17. Pick three people to check in with every day. Say, How are you feeling? Then say how you're feeling too.
18. Call your representative. Talk as long as you want. Tell whoever answers the phone that you think healthcare should be for everyone.
19. Read up on what it really means to be middle class. You probably aren't as well off as you think. Consider a world where sharing made more sense than trying to be successful on your own.
20. Share. Whatever you have, if you have more than one of anything, tell yourself, I have this so I can share. Then give something away every day.
21. Write a letter. We won't always be here. Write to whoever you think of when you read that. Tell them how you feel in longhand then send it.
22. Follow disability justice activists. Start with Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha. Learn about ableism.
23. Clean your house like you're preparing for a new world because you are.
24. Say Metta when you wash your hands. Look in the mirror and say it again for the whole world. "May we be well, happy and peaceful. May no harm come to us, may no problem come to us, may we always meet with success. May we also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome the inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life."
25. Send the money directly to any local service provider whose services you might skip due to a quarantine. Say, I know you're taking a hit with this thing. Thank you for all that you do.
26. Notice the leaders who see their role as making sure the people have the resources they need to flourish. Notice who is protecting and deflecting responsibility. Throw your weight behind anyone willing to take on difficulty for the well-being of the collective. First responders, hospital workers, public health officials, we heart you.
27. Say you're sorry. For any time you were annoyed with someone with a chronic illness. For any time you thought they were making up. Say I didn't understand before, and I'm so so sorry it's been like this for you for so long without my understanding or support.

28. Make room for joy. Life is going to slow down for a minute. There will be time for things you never have time for and a stillness that might feel new. Ask yourself what isn't as necessary as you might have thought.

29. Go outside. Tell the earth hi. Ask if the earth has any requests of you. Introduce yourself if you've never done this before.

30. Burn your worries in a pyrex pan. Write them on little strips of paper. Write them and say I know I'm not the only one. I know so many feel this too.

31. Start the thing you always wanted to start. Do it like the world is on fire. Do it like your pants are on fire. Do it like it will never happen or you'll never get another chance. Do it because you want to that bad. Do it for the babies looking at all the worried faces. Do it for the trees. Do it for the you who already knows what's really important. For the you who knows what we have to do.

With thanks for sharing this, Jen. I hope these ideas are helpful to you, and/or spark other ideas for you.

Links I found interesting this week:

The [CDC site](#) now appears to have recent news about COVID-19 and can be a source of information moving forward, from who is at most risk to preparation advice. [Harvard also has a site for Coronavirus information](#) that might prove helpful. As does the [National Governors Association](#).

Let's all go to Biscuitville [for fresh biscuits and poetry](#).

A [story of homelessness](#) you won't soon forget.

COMING UP

ONLINE CLASS: Hard Conversations: Whiteness, Race, and Social Justice - Begins April 7. Focuses on white racial identity, hallmarks of white supremacy culture, what it means to be white in a racist world, and how to create a positive white identity. [Go here](#) for info.

ONLINE CLASS: Hard Conversations Book Club - It's never too late to join this group of folks who read and think in community each month. Our reading list will expand your world. You can find the 2020 list and other information [here](#).

Life is a Verb Camp - October 29 - November 1, 2020, near Asheville NC. [Go here](#) to get information and to register. You'll leave inspired, with an amazing community to support you in your journey. Poets Jericho Brown, Andrea Gibson, and Mahogany Browne headline this year's Camp. Only a few tickets remain.

Thanks for reading. If you like this newsletter and want to support it, forward it to someone who'd like it. If you're seeing this newsletter for the first time, [you can subscribe here](#).

Be compassionate,

Patti

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