



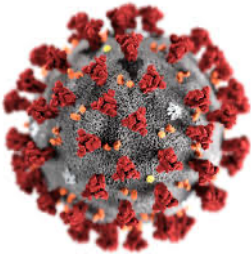
*You are
Never Alone*

Feeling Alone

Being ill, even just a little ill, can feel very lonely. We can probably all think of someone who, when they get a bad cold, reverts to a child who wants to be nurtured and cared for by their “mommy” and who is pissed off that no one seems to notice or care. Maybe we make fun of them, but only gently if it happens to be our husband! But in all honesty, we each have a bit of that child in us and it does not feel good to be isolated from others when we are feeling under the weather. All kinds of catastrophic scenarios can play out in our heads. We imagine the headlines: *Barking dog alerts neighbors*. And the comments, “*Well, I hadn’t seen them for a few days but I don’t like to be up in people’s business. I just figured they had friends or family looking out for them, you know. Do you want my picture?*”



A little humor! But I know it’s far from funny to be alone at home and running fever or feeling discomfort. And of course the Covid-19 context has made it so difficult for even ordinary connections with people. We are avoiding each other, trying not to linger in stores, ordering food to be delivered. We can’t even interact with the person who delivers our food - it’s “contact free” delivery. And what about our relatives? If we are elderly they need to stay away, but if we are elderly we have more need of them! We are caught. I have a good friend I haven’t seen in over 7 months, and she hasn’t even met her latest grandbaby who lives a plane ride away.



This isn’t fun and it’s not going away any day soon. With that in mind I have put together some ways to help us all cope.

God's Plan?

After an assessment of your feelings, you may have discovered that you are angry, and one of the “people” you are angry at is God. What does God have in mind with this, is God trying to teach you a lesson? It's uncomfortable to realize that we are angry with God, but it is absolutely okay. There is much biblical precedent for being angry at God, and letting God know! Many of the Psalms, and the whole Book of Job wrestle with this topic and ask:

“God, is this your plan? What did I do to deserve this?”

Nothing! You did nothing to deserve this because that can't be how God works. If it is, then how do we explain the abuse or illness and death of innocent children who have not lived long enough to deserve any punishment. Unless God is evil and just wants to hurt us.

All traditional world faiths teach that the Supreme Being, YHWH, the Tao, the Creator God, is good. Yet each faith asks the same, eternal question: *“Why do bad things happen to good people?”* Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote a book under this title in which he suggests that by creating the universe God allowed for nature to have its own independent laws, and by creating humans with free will, God gave up control of human behavior and left it up to us to choose right or wrong. Nature and the weather follow established laws; humans have Free Will.

Hurricanes and floods occur even in the most religious communities. People get sick or inherit bad genes regardless of how faithful they are to their religion or how much they donate. More people are living to over 100, but millions of babies die before their first birthday. It seems it's not about *deserving* to suffer or die, after all.



If you are Christian, you know that Jesus completely rejected the idea that illness was connected to sin ([Gospel of John, 9:1–12](#)). And he taught his followers about an Abba God, a Dad, who loves his children without judgement and forgives them without condition, if they just come home to Him after they stray (Luke 15:11–32, the Parable of the Prodigal Son).

So, what about God's Plan? Maybe God's Plan is about the big picture of our lives, our world. Life happens. People get sick with the same diagnosis; some recover, some die. And God's Plan? Maybe God's Plan is about the big picture of our lives, our world.

Maybe God doesn't pick and choose who gets sick and when.
Maybe God doesn't micromanage the universe like that.

But perhaps there is a Plan, nonetheless. Perhaps God's Plan is that we discover the presence of something greater than ourselves both in our joys and in our sufferings, and we experience the Truth that we are never alone. And perhaps God's Plan is that we should learn to appreciate all of our everyday gifts and find some way to create something good out of the bad things that randomly happen to us.

Reflect

Can you identify one small way in which a recent negative experience has had a positive effect on you, or those you love, or those who care for you?

Has someone voiced a renewed appreciation for life and health?
Has someone decided to reach out and mend broken fences?

Take a deep breath; be open; listen.

An Assessment

The first step towards feeling better is to make an honest assessment of your current emotional situation.

- Can you name the feelings you are experiencing?
- Is there a part of your body that is very tense? Your neck, for example.
- Or are you experiencing a “nervous” stomach - acid stomach, cramps? Headaches?

Imagine you are talking to each part of your body that is stressed and ask it, “What are you feeling? What do you need?” This isn’t as crazy as it sounds. Our bodies hold our emotions for us when we cannot deal with them. Sometimes our bodies hold our memories, too.

Perhaps there is a part of you that feels “younger,” like a small child-self, or a teenage you. Don’t be embarrassed, everyone has inside of them the needy child and the moody teenager they once were. We even say, “He’s behaving like a child,” or “You sound just like you did at sixteen!” The truth is, the needs of our younger self(ves) remain part of us and can surface when we feel scared, or powerless, or angry, or sad. In the role of a chaplain, I often experienced elderly patients tearfully asking for their long-deceased mother, or wanting to share how hurt they were as a child. Being sick makes us very susceptible to a “visit” from our childhood feelings and needs.

Getting Your Needs Met

So be kind to yourself and write down what your body is telling you, without editing, without judgment. If the need that surfaces feels “silly” or childish that’s great! You are getting in touch. Indulge yourself. Respond to the needs you are uncovering in safe and healthful ways, and with adult wisdom and appropriate boundaries. For example, don’t ask the nurse for a cuddle, but ask friends and family for a hug. 😊

- Get paper and colored pens or finger paints and let your inner child get messy and draw.
- Have a donut.
- Find an essential oil fragrance that you like.

Smell, touch, taste, sight, hearing - all the senses can be indulged in wonderful, nurturing ways. What will you do?

For my part, I know that part of me likes to make bubbles with the dish soap bottle in the kitchen, and watch Disney movies. I feel safer with a night light, and I have a favorite blanket!

Eulogy for the Martyred Children *

(excerpt)

Now I say to you in conclusion,
life is hard,
at times as hard as crucible steel.
It has its bleak and difficult moments.
Like the ever-flowing waters of the river,
life has its moments of drought and its moments of flood.
Like the ever-changing cycle of the seasons,
life has the soothing warmth of its summers
and the piercing chill of its winters.
But if one will hold on,
[they] will discover that God walks with [them],
and that God is able
to lift you from the fatigue of despair
to the buoyancy of hope
and transform dark and desolate valleys
into sunlit paths of inner peace.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

18 September 1963

Birmingham, Alabama

Reflect

Where do you find hope?

Can you find it in nature?

Can you see it in the eyes of someone who cares about you?

Can you feel it in God's loving presence with you today?

*<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/eulogy-martyred-children>

What am I carrying that I can lay down?

When we have to take a break from our usual routine because of an illness, we have an opportunity to reflect on where we are in our lives and in our relationships. You can't reach adulthood without some emotional baggage accumulating. There are people who have hurt us or abandoned us. There are people we have hurt or we have betrayed. Wouldn't it feel good to let go of some of the negative energy we hold, and the negative symptoms it creates — acid stomach, headaches, nightmares, anger, ulcers ... the list can go on? So maybe it's time to let go of this baggage.

Dr. Ira Byock has written a book addressing this very issue. He suggests that there are four simple phrases that have the power to heal our relationships with others and release us from our inner struggles with anger and resentment over old hurts.

“Please forgive me”

“I forgive you”

“I love you”

“Thank you”

***The Four Things That Matter Most,
a Book About Living
Dr. Ira Byock, M.D.***

Reflect

To whom do you need to say each of these phrases? A spouse, a parent, a child, a friend God?

Can you do it freely without expecting anything in return?

Perhaps write down your anger and hurts, your guilt and sorrow, and for each one ask yourself if you are ready to let it go. Remember that forgiving someone does not mean you think their behavior was acceptable. **No.** It means you are ready to let go of the pain that it continues to cause *you*. If you choose to write your forgiveness in a letter, you don't have to send it. This is about *your* healing, not about theirs.

The same is true for things that you need to forgive *yourself* for. You can writing a loving letter to yourself; sometimes forgiving ourselves for our mistakes is hardest. Or you can write one to the person you hurt, and again, choose to send the letter or not.

I am There (excerpt)

*“When you need Me, I am there.
Even if you deny Me, I am there.
Even when you feel most alone, I am there.
Even in your fears, I am there.
Even in your pain, I am there.”*

James Dillet Freeman

Reflect

James Dillet Freeman (March 20, 1912 - April 9, 2003) was a poet and a minister in the Unity Church. When he lost his wife to cancer, his faith was tested. And like Rabbi Harold Kushner (*When Bad Things Happen to Good People*) Freeman expressed his struggle through his writing. In moments of despair he felt in his heart that God was telling him “When you need me, I am there.” But he continued to struggle and continued to question.

What are some words of comfort you might offer yourself, from your own Wise Mind, or from the Divine, or from the wisdom of the Natural World?

Perhaps,

You are not alone

Your pain is real but it will soften and become bearable over time

You can do this...

Meditation

Have someone read this aloud to you so you can participate. Or perhaps record it on your phone so you can listen and follow along any time.

(Beginning of Script)

Get as comfortable as you can, sitting up or lying down.

- *Become aware of your breath by putting your hand on your stomach and feeling your abdomen rise and fall as you breathe in and out.*
- *Close your eyes and picture a peaceful, beautiful place in nature. Somewhere you have visited or would like to visit.*
- *What do you see? What season is it? What are the colors?*
- *Is it day or night?*
- *What do you hear? Are there birds, or ocean waves?*
- *Do you see the branches move and hear the wind swishing up above in the trees?*
- *What do you smell? Is there salt sea air? Or the smell of flowers? Or lush green grass?*
- *Imagine a comfortable place to sit in your scene. A padded folding chair or seaside deck chair, perhaps, or on the sand. Give yourself a warm blanket if there is a chill in the air.*

Focus on your breathing.

Slowly breathe in the refreshing, cool, clean air. Imagine it flowing into your chest and down your arms and legs. Then as you slowly breathe out, focus on each part of your body in turn, consciously relaxing and letting go of the physical tension, starting with your face - forehead, eyes, and jaw.



(Script continues on the next page.)

(Script continued. Begin Relaxation)

- *Deep breath in ...*
- *Breathe out ... and untense your forehead, soften your eyes, loosen your jaw.*

- *Deep breath in ...*
- *Breathe out ... and focus on releasing tension from your neck and shoulders.*

Continue this pattern of slow breathing and releasing tension, breath by breath. Focus on your back ... Your arms ... Your legs ... All the way to your toes.

When you have relaxed your body as much as you can, check in once again with your whole body from head to toe and breathe out any leftover tension you find.

Continue to breathe gently, and as deeply as is comfortable. Focus on the beauty and calm in your imaginary surroundings.

When distracting thoughts enter your mind, imagine clearing a middle space in your mind, like Moses parting the waters, and gently move the thoughts to the edges of your clearing. You can deal with them later.

Spend a few minutes enjoying the peace and when you are ready slowly open your eyes and become aware of where you are. (End of script)

If you would like to include affirmations in your meditation, there are some suggestions on the following page. But the best ones are the affirmations **you** need to hear. Consider writing your own.

*There are lots of similar meditations available on **Phone Apps** like **CALM** and **Breath**, and on **You Tube** where you can search, **Relaxation, Meditation, Guided Meditation.***

I'm Losing it!

If you are sick, or home and feeling depressed, there may be friends you can call, or family. But some days.....Aaargh! On those days maybe you need to be alone for a while so you can manage your *uglies*.

We all have days like this, and being ill or being in lock-down requires so much more patience than our regular lives that it's not surprising we sometimes experience ugly thoughts and feelings and have to let off steam.

But how can you do it without collateral damage? Perhaps tell your family or friends that you don't want to talk today. Perhaps even apologize in advance for being a bit short-tempered. Then let it out safely. Here are some ways to do that.

- Is there someone you can complain to and express (un)reasonable feelings to and they will just listen? Call them and say, *I need to vent! Do you have a little time today? When?*
- Get out a notebook and write down how you feel. Don't edit yourself, don't hold back. It doesn't have to sound reasonable or fair. You don't have to show anybody. Just writing it down helps to get the energy out of our heads.
- If you are able to, hold a pillow in front of your face and scream — maybe warn anybody near you ahead of time. If you find it hard to form a scream, start by growling. This worked for me.
- If you have access to paper and crayons, you might try coloring your feelings. You may need a lot of blue, black, and red. And big toddler-size crayons stand up to punishment better than the skinny ones. Tearing up your picture afterwards can also feel empowering.
- Actually tearing old magazines can be therapeutic in itself, but if you combine the activity with making a collage it can be a source

Affirmations

Be still and breathe gently and deeply while you read or listen to these affirmations. If one doesn't feel right for you, set it aside.



- You are safe
- You are loved
- You are not alone
- There are people who value your presence in their lives
- You make life better for others
- You make a difference
- You can love yourself and allow others to love you
- You can speak to yourself gently with love and support
- You can fill your mind with positive thoughts
- You have the strength to ask for help and support when you need it
- You deserve to have boundaries and have the people in your life respect those boundaries
- You have the courage to act even when you are afraid
- You can be patient with yourself
- You deserve to be here
- You deserve to focus on yourself and your healing
- Let people take care of you
- You deserve to rest

Reflect

What are some other affirmations or positive statements **you** need to hear? Write them down.

of self-expression. Cut out words and pictures. Arrange them any way you want. And use a glue stick to set them down on a sheet of paper. Have a bag for the pieces you don't want so you can tidy up afterwards.

- Go on-line and order coloring books for adults (as opposed to "adult" coloring books, I made that mistake 😊) and also a set of fine tipped markers. You can get glitter markers, too. And then there are sets of stencils you can order if you feel creative but don't trust your drawing skills. I love pretty journals or sketch books, they make me happy. And I can always tear out anything I don't like.

Reflect

What did you choose to do?

How did it feel?

What would you do differently next time?

Is there someone you can share it with?



Trees



I love trees. They help connect me to where I am in the moment; they ground me. They help me see that my life is part of a much bigger story. I watch as the wind passes from one treetop to the next, as if in conversation. And I sense there is something more, something within and also beyond what I see and experience in nature, and this is where meaning lies, for me.

The traditional Japanese religion, Shinto, recognizes the presence of spirits or gods in natural elements - rocks, water, and trees, for example. In modern Japan there is a practice called “forest bathing” which is simply, but profoundly, spending time immersed in the woods. There are tangible, measurable health benefits from spending time in a forest. Health, spirituality, and nature are linked.

Reflect

How can you ground yourself when you are anxious? Hold a rock or prayer beads. Many religions use prayer beads. Holding something cold can also help. Smelling your favorite essential oils can change your mood. Lavender is always calming for me.

Change

Nature gives me perspective – all life dies; all life recycles. Energy cannot be destroyed only changed. The atoms that make us up were once part of something else, and will go on to become something else when we die. There is a sense of eternal life built into nature, in the very way in which our world continues to recreate itself season after season, generation upon generation.

Nature teaches me acceptance: all of life is change. And it teaches me gratitude - for life and beauty. Being in nature reminds me to look up and appreciate the vastness of the universe, to look around and notice the different forms of life surrounding me, to look down and see the smallest animals and insects and the earth that sustains all of us. Being in nature reminds me of the sacredness of our natural resources and the tremendous gifts of our senses to see, hear, smell, touch, taste.

Reflect

What is your favorite place to visit, or do you have a bucket list place? Visiting a place in your imagination has been shown to raise the levels of positive chemicals in the brain.

Create a vivid picture in your mind right now with sounds and smells.

Perhaps, use a relaxation recording with appropriate nature sounds. Close



Amazing Grace

I spent decades singing Christian songs. But after losing my son at age 24, I couldn't sing them any more. I was angry with God; I doubted God. As the years passed I began to find comfort in Christian music again. Just as I had turned to writers who grappled with their faith after experiencing a loss, I turned to songwriters who sang through their doubt and despair. No one is immune to these struggles, even the famous Catholic nun, Mother Teresa, wrote about her doubt. These songs spoke to me.

MercyMe,

Even If

"They say it only takes a little faith, to move a mountain.
Well good thing. A little faith is all I have, right now."

I Can Only Imagine

"I can only imagine what it will be like
When I walk, by your side
I can only imagine what my eyes will see
When you face is before me"

Lauren Daigle

You Say

"You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing
You say I am strong when I think I am weak
And You say I am held when I am falling short."

Look up Child

"Where are You now, when darkness seems to win?
Where are You now, when the world is crumbling?"

Learning to Laugh

Sometimes we are afraid to laugh. If tragedy has happened to us or someone we care about, we feel guilty about laughing. But laughter is literally medicine for the body and soul. It creates positive chemicals in our bodies and it releases pent up emotions. Sometimes we end up in a state of catharsis crying because we have just felt the truth that life goes on and it is possible to feel happiness again.

I can't recommend laughing enough. This should probably be the first page, but I don't think you would have accepted the idea at the beginning. Of course, finding appropriate comedy can be difficult and everybody has their own standards of appropriateness.

A very safe place to find a laugh is on Dry Bar Comedy. It is a Youtube channel and is always squeaky clean. On Dry Bar I like, Fred Klett, Leanne Morgan, Jeff Allen, Shayne Smith, Karen Rontowski.

Also, on Youtube there are two British comedians I love, Peter Kay and Michael McIntyre. In fact Michael is my favorite (and he's easier to understand). When I can't sleep I just listen to his comedy, even though I've heard it before.

Be well. Love yourself. Let yourself be loved. Live every day as a gift.

Blessings,

Mona



Coldplay

Fix You

“When the tears come streaming down your face
'Cause you lose something you can't replace
When you love someone but it goes to waste
Could it be worse?”

Reflect

What are some song lyrics that spoken to you?

What is it that you connect you?

Have you ever tried searching on YouTube for songs on a particular topic? There is so much available and free on YouTube.

