



To mothers and grandmothers everywhere – women who have children and those who don't; those who forever mourn the loss of a child; the one who wraps her wings around those who need somebody to nurture, guide or cherish them; the compassionate souls who adopt, foster or rescue those who need a safe, loving home – we celebrate and honour YOU today.

A Happy Mother's Day to all!

Connecting

Welcome back, everyone!

May, 2020

Many of us have now had an opportunity to don our homemade masks & gloves (on both hands) drama-ready for any “procedure”—as we cautiously weaved our way through a maze of overturned carts hoping to spot the front door of Costco. My first homemade mask was of a light, silky material that suctioned to my nose with each inhalation! My second attempt was not prettier, but admittedly more durable. Hyperventilating under a mask is pretty terrifying, but the fear of not wearing one is much worse, so we endure the discomfort, knowing that this pales in comparison to a ventilator should one of us get sick.

After a mad dash about the parking lot, huffing and puffing our way to vehicles with items that feel like winning lottery tickets, we glance again at the bill, to make sure we are not hallucinating, and to be sure, it is what we feared it read the first time we looked at it. I have my daily fill of cable news, cry more often than I like to admit, and fear for the front-line workers that trudge off each and every day, praying that they will not be

among the stricken. I like to visualize each and every image of those I see on TV as having a place reserved for them in heaven someday for giving their heart and soul, and last ounce of energy to serve the rest of us.

So what does all this mean for families who have loved ones living far away, parents in nursing homes, children who are frightened to go to sleep at night after hearing somebody call the Covid-19 the “Invisible Monster” on TV? Parents have become reluctant teachers. Moms are trying to win the hearts of anxious children by creating meals that would make Emeril LaGasse shout “Bam”. Some have worn out the main tv and have now dusted the cobwebs

“So how has this pandemic changed the bereavement experience?”

off the spare in the basement so they can continue with their latest series on Netflix. Less cars are on the roads, but those that are there seem to be going so

much faster. Why? in a rush to go nowhere? Today, I ponder next week's activities.... retyping my "To Do" list, this time in Caps to emphasize the urgency of getting certain things *started* before my next "deadline".

There is a difference in people as they journal from week to week, coping with this new reality. It has become a drudgery for some to get up in the



morning, showers now happen between 2 and 3 pm. since time stands still for much of the day. Tears flow easily for those of us who are bereaved, as we miss, remember and try to forgive our loved ones for having left us to cope without them through the worst event in our lifetimes. We are reminded every few minutes of the latest pandemic fatalities; and our hearts break repeatedly.... for those we love, for people and families that we will never know, for stories of bravery, compassion and delightful acts of love and generosity by children...many who are very young, who are making face mask holders on their 3D printers, or distributing snack bags to hospitals for front line workers, or calling their grandmothers every night.



Grief is tempered with Goodness.

We whisper quietly to those we mourn who have passed, telling them how grateful we are that they are being spared this adventure that is causing so much suffering. The worst thing is being separated from those we love. Reasons for separation are as varied as people themselves.... distance, illness, lockdowns at seniors residences, no public transit in rural areas, travel restrictions, incarceration, or perhaps estrangement. As human beings, we crave touch, tenderness, familiarity,

sharing historical family events—during times of joy, sadness or crisis. Yet, we find ourselves hunkered down, squinting through a tiny screen to catch a fleeting glimpse of those who matter most before we lose the shaky image on our Facetime call. To hear somebody's voice... to see their face...to get a card for no reason. Those are the things that fill our cup; and goodness knows; right now---as we try to make sense of death, dying, and the exorbitant void that we are left with after a loss, we need somebody to fill our cup.

So how has the pandemic changed the bereavement experience?

First of all, some were not allowed to see or visit loved ones in their last hours or days. That in itself takes some serious reconciliation to convince our hearts what our brain already knows.... that none of this was our fault. If we could have been with our loved one, for even a minute, we would have walked through fire to do so. Taking care of others has to be our first priority; and it is by “squatting in place” that we are saving lives.

Yes, you heard right. Each and every day we stay home, don't engage in risky behavior, or venture out for reasons other than getting groceries or medications (or delivering goods to those who can't get them for themselves).... each time we wear a mask and gloves.... we are saving lives.



How great a gift is that? Some are fortunate in their lives to “save a life” either by donating blood or a kidney, reacting when somebody collapsed in their presence or having rescued an animal from a certain death.

Now we each have that power; and bless you for making the choice to do that. None of us knows if we are a carrier. We may feel fantastic, yet could be an unknowing mobile host for this Coronavirus.

When a loved one dies, arrangements and tributes reflect all the love and strength we can muster at an inconsolable time, to making sure the deceased is honoured with all the grace, respect, dignity, and acknowledgment that they deserve. During this time, however, memorials and burials are postponed or cancelled.



Many will recall the loss of loved ones during this pandemic... how mourning was suspended in time... how they had to endure incredible sorrow, alone.... because nobody was allowed to visit, or console them, body to body, as we once were able to do...without fear or hesitancy.

“Each time we wear a mask . . . we are saving lives. How great a gift is that?”

Obituaries still showcase the life and legacy of loved ones, but the opportunity to hug, cry on somebody’s shoulder, to have folks rotate staying with you is no longer happening. You are left to rely on the kind words of your support system to get you through the long days, and especially the never-ending nights. We are learning how to be our own BFF (best friend forever). Phones, facetime, zoom, and the like are utilized to connect with the bereaved.

Don’t forget that Canada Post is still there for us; and there is nothing more sacred right now to someone who is grieving than to get a “handwritten” note from somebody recalling a special time or cherished memory of a loved one. Creating a little memorial corner of your garden allows you to have a place to go while being isolated, where you can light a candle, sit a while, watching the

butterflies and birds flutter about, as you listen for a familiar voice to visit you in your sorrow. Tending to a favourite flower of your loved one by your chair lets you “do something” to honour their memory and celebrate their life. Each new bloom, a subtle reminder that life goes on, and every spring brings hope and wonder.. We

see for ourselves how dormant plants appear again, determined to teach us about resilience and renewal, even after the harshest winters. Birds

rush about delivering twigs as they prepare a new nest... and two little rabbits frolicked around in my front yard two nights ago...without any regard for social distancing.



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*I came alone;
I left connected.*
