

The Choice of Fear or Hope

Now that we have been living with COVID-19 in Ontario close to one year, it is almost impossible to avoid seeing the updates when reading any news on-line or watching television. Since the number of people infected with COVID-19 in the summer of 2020 pales in comparison to the higher numbers that are now being reported on a daily basis, it is understandable that anxiety about the pandemic has become more intense. It is also very easy to understand why many people leap from awareness to concern to worry, and finally to fear.

However, we must rely on our best strengths as human beings, including our reason, kindness and compassion, during such an unprecedented and exceedingly difficult time. Seeking to view the pandemic from the most useful perspective could benefit all of us. Acknowledging our worries, anxieties and fears and moving beyond them, rather than jumping into panic mode, could be the wisest course of action.

Now that it is January of 2021, we can decide how we want to greet the coming year. January can be a time when people experience the winter doldrums. The holidays are over, the days can be dark and gloomy, the New Year's resolutions may have become a distant glimmer in the corners of one's mind, and the number of people who have contracted COVID-19 continues to rise. However, there is still the choice of hope right now.

The possibility of 2021 brings the hope of much-needed vaccines for COVID-19. In many countries around the world, highly skilled scientists are working around the clock to create, distribute, and administer safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines. There are also millions of people who are consistently wearing masks, washing their hands frequently, practicing physical distancing, and staying at home as much as they can, as well as all of the tireless frontline workers who are helping our society to heal and function.

Often, future-oriented thinking can reduce the present to just another stepping stone on the way to our goals that are supposedly going to be met in the future when everything will be "perfect". We assume that everything will be perfect when we have the right vaccine, finish that project, pay off that last bill, realize our goal weight, or get that new gadget we have been dying to buy. Here and now, we are faced again with the choice to move beyond the illusion that all will be "perfect" at some future time.

I think life is happening right now, and it is up to us to enjoy it. It does not mean that we have to be contributing 150% to every single thing we are doing, or need to be happy 100% of the time. It means that we are being in the now, living in the moment, and actually seeing the gifts and blessings in our lives on a daily basis. It also means living from a deeper place inside that feels love and experiences forgiveness for every living creature.

The way through fear is not to shut out any anxious thoughts or feelings, but to go beyond all

the "what if" questions and realize that there is a much bigger version of ourselves than worry can contain. Within all of us exists hope, peace, love, kindness, joy, and forgiveness. There are a myriad of possibilities within situations that might at first appear "bad" or "good". Many people find a deeper perspective through spiritual activities, such as meditation, church services, time spent in nature, journaling, or inspirational books. You may find this deeper path in your own unique and special way.

Rather than beginning 2021 swallowed up in fear and anxiety, why not choose hope, perspective, peace, and prosperity? Resist making it conditional, and open yourself to it right now. While you take all of the important and necessary precautions to keep yourself safe from COVID-19, this outlook will help to make each and every moment your best moment!