

Connecting while social distancing

Surviving the new normal amid COVID-19 has been trending on social media. Everyone has shared their own two cents on how to survive these strange and difficult times. When all the advice is filtered out, it comes down to a few basic things: human connection, routine, self-care, and being kind. Truly, one has to be proactive and shift the mindset from a place of “I hate what is happening to me/us” to “I wonder what we can get from this.” We have an opportunity as a community and culture to come together, persevere and come out stronger than before. We can do this.

So how do we connect while social distancing? There are several free social platforms like Zoom, FaceTime, Skype and Facebook Messenger Video that let more than one person show their face and see others on a live call. Being “face to face” allows a person to name their worry, find solidarity, laugh, find joy, express all the big feels and take a break from isolation. I’ve been connecting virtually with a group of friends once a day, naming our gathering time



KELLY BREVIG

the “happy hour.” We go to a place in the house where we won’t be interrupted, shut the door, log in and visit like we would at a coffee shop or on a Friday night. Inviting co-workers to a 15-minute virtual break is another great idea to stay connected. This can be a great place to laugh and allow creative juices to flow, making teams stronger and better. Focusing on family and out of touch friends is also important. A daily message or phone call just to say “hi” can go a long way when someone else is feeling alone.

Routine is a great way to make it through the day and encompasses self-care. Starting with making your bed, showering and getting dressed to a few games of cards in the evening, there are plenty of things to keep us on track. Dogs still need to be walked, food still needs to be prepared and even more than ever, the

house and everything in it needs to be cleaned and sanitized. A regular bedtime is also important, honoring the body by providing the sleep we need to function. Self-care includes making time for hobbies, music and humor. Some coaches who prepare Olympic athletes actually encourage a week of watching comedy movies and TV shows before a big event. It helps release feel-good chemicals and lower anxiety. Eating well during this time is also as important as exercise. Self-care is so much more than a hot bubble bath; it is taking time to get outside and responsibly wave to the neighbors while breathing in the fresh spring air. It is slowing down to listen to the body and reaching out for help when we are worried, afraid, depressed or lonesome. It is also refraining from too much social media, walking away from 24-hour news coverage and allowing other thoughts to enter our minds for a while.

Being kind can be difficult when locked in a house with our loved ones. My grandma had a saying: “Home is where you grumble the most

and are treated the best.” Because we feel safe with our chosen circle, we often let down our guard and show our more difficult side. Being on the receiving end of frustration can be very challenging and problematic. It is easy to reciprocate words and emotions, especially when they are not always positive. Remember that increased stress can bring an onslaught of bad behavior. Give others time and space, and understand that crabbiness is often situational. We may merely be a convenient, safe outlet. “I” statements and apologies can go a long way. Listen to others and practice kindness in everything we do.

In a world of unknowns, focus on the positive and the things we can control. Also know that while things might be shut down, the Mobile Crisis is still up and running. If you find yourself or a loved one in a situation that you just need to talk through, please call the 24-hour crisis hotline at 1-800-422-0045. They are here to help, just like always.

Kelly Brevig is Suicide Educational Services Coordinator for Evergreen Youth & Family Services, Inc.

CARTOONIST'S VIEW



I MISS YOU TOO, GRAMMA...

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stay-at-home measures do work if followed

The April 1 letter criticizing leadership for taking unprecedented measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic has flawed analogies. During the Civil War there was at least some expectation that lives would be lost, even if it was vastly underestimated. These were armed soldiers. Additionally, with the state of medical treatment 160 years ago it was also pretty much a forgone conclusion that soldiers would not survive many injuries they would today. Until recently, people in this country didn’t face the possibility of dying just going about their daily lives. There’s a big difference from going off to war and becoming infected from something one did not choose.

Comparisons to celebrities and sports figures are without merit. Many have been able to get tested preemptively or showing only mild symptoms when others have died after being denied testing even though they were quite ill. Additionally, because of their money these people have access to the best health care available. They don’t have to deal with ending up in a hospital in New York City where medical professionals are overwhelmed and facing the prospect of no ventilators in a week or two.

I won’t bother to address the other comparisons mentioned in

this letter. Some appear to be taken from social media platforms. The latest estimate is that even with the measures that are currently being taken, more than 100,000 people in the U.S. may still die. Certainly this could be lower, but it also could be higher. That statistic is based on modeling derived in part from numbers in China and other places that have experienced the pandemic longer than the U.S.

Our economy can eventually recover but we are part of a society where it’s not just cost-benefit but values. The stay-at-home measures do work if followed. Currently there are six cases in Beltrami County. Travel warnings were out before the second week of March as well as advice to social distance. By then there were plenty of examples internationally and in the U.S. of the consequences for not heeding them. The sooner people begin taking the governor’s directive seriously, the sooner we can get back to some semblance of normalcy.

Nancy Wasik, Bemidji

Bidding against each other?

I can’t imagine how we would have won World War II if each infantry division and ship and aircraft squadron had to bid against each other for supplies on the open market.

Mike Armer, Bemidji

Election must go on

Our fast-changing world is a far different place than it was even a couple of weeks ago. And with health challenges only expected to ramp up in the coming weeks and months, our new reality is frighteningly unclear.

One thing remains certain, however: “The 2020 statewide elections must go on as scheduled,” as Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon said last week.

Moreover, Simon said, “We need to be prepared for a different kind of election than we are used to. Whatever happens, I’m determined that Minnesotans should not have to choose between their health and their right to vote.”

Minnesotans can be open to innovative and creative ways to pull off this year’s campaigning and balloting, ensuring that all eligible voters are able to participate. No idea being brainstormed right now is set in stone — and shouldn’t be without approval from Minnesota’s politically split Legislature. The two sides of the aisle can come together to ensure a fair and as-inclusive-as-possible election. Now is the time to consider and debate unintended consequences of doing things differently, assuming we’ll need to.

Under consideration by the secretary of state’s office, Simon said, is mailing ballots to registered voters to fill out at home and then mail back. Simon and staff also are considering expanding absentee voting, reducing the number of polling places, limiting polling places to centralized locations, and moving polling places away from pandemic-

vulnerable spots like senior care facilities.

“I’m actively reaching out to partners across Minnesota to explore the options before us. We’re all going to have to work together to maximize the safety and security of this year’s statewide elections,” Simon said. “Rest assured, no matter what Congress decides to do about providing help to states as they confront the cost of increased voting by mail, we in Minnesota are working on an election plan now. Whatever option we use, we’ll do the planning thoughtfully, carefully, and together.”

DFLer Simon can take extra care to ensure that differing viewpoints are considered in finalizing the best plan possible and that Republicans are part of his “and together.” Republican Party of Minnesota Chairwoman Jennifer Carnahan is already expressing concern that “we do not jump the gun to make changes that are at this point unnecessary.”

“It is concerning to see Secretary of State Steve Simon and Minnesota DFL Chair Ken Martin rushing to change laws surrounding voting in elections that are months and months away,” she said in a statement.

Those months will pass quickly, and the bottom line remains: The election must go on. If it means doing it differently, it’s on Simon, lawmakers from both sides of the aisle, and Republicans and DFLers alike to work together to ensure fairness, equal opportunity to participate, and — perhaps most importantly of all — a safe vote.

Duluth News Tribune

From the Pioneer archives

10 years ago

April 8, 2010 – A second state championship is the goal of the Bagley-Fosston girls track and field team, and coach Doug Carlson believes that a repeat performance is possible. “We would like to try and repeat as the state champion,” Carlson said. “We feel we have the talent to defend and the kids have a positive attitude.”

25 years ago

April 8, 1995 – “I’m not down or negative, but it’s a sad situation the way the state is viewing education,” says Vern Treat, president of Northwest Technical College-Bemidji. “Opportunity is directly proportional to funding.” Treat announced that the remaining five Northwest Technical College campuses are facing reduced allocations from the state amounting to \$3 million.

50 years ago

April 8, 1970 – Professional wrestling fans can see some of the best in the business here. The opening event matches two Texans; Jim Osborne, 250 pounds versus Bob Windham, 190 pounds. The special event matches Butcher Vachon versus Billy Red Cloud in a two out of three fall match with a 45-minute time limit. The main event brings two rivals, Red Bastien versus Mad Dog Vachon.

100 years ago

April 8, 1920 – Traveling at present under the name of G.W. Baker, but with a string of aliases, including William Cassell, J.W. Bates, J.R. Campbell, J.W. Wakely and J.W. Bennett, a con man specializing in life and accident insurance, was placed under arrest in Thief River Falls upon receipt of a wire from Sheriff Johnson of Bemidji.

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