

Reflections on Gratitude, Transformation, and Hope in the Time COVID-19

By Rachel Davis

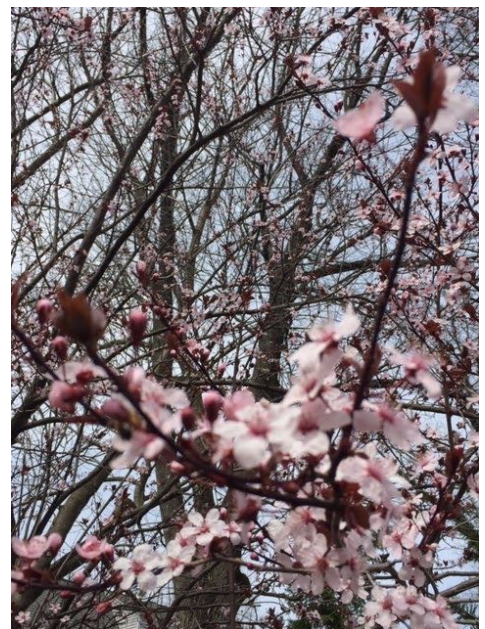
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I'm thankful that the "stay at home" orders happened during Spring in New Jersey when we're surrounded with flower buds, tiny eggs in birds' nests, and green plants pushing out of the soil. All are reminders that there is a season for everything: birth, life, death, then the rebirth of spring all over again. A constant transformation of life as we know it.

Slowing Down

During the weeks since schools closed as part of the social distancing mandates to slow the spread of COVID-19, not only has the spread of the virus slowed, but the pace of life itself has slowed. The stress of the usual morning routine that includes me impatiently reminding my sons, "It's not acceptable for mommy to be late to work, so please put on your shoes NOW," has been replaced by the absence of alarm clocks, time to eat breakfast together, and no need for shoes since we're working and learning from home. The usual rush through dinner to get to sports practice has been replaced with meaningful conversations at the dinner table. Even the bedtime routine has become more relaxed since the mornings start later.



While I've remained physically distant from family and friends, it's been a time of intentional connection. Since our calendars are more or less blank due to cancelations of social events, we have time for lengthy conversations on the phone or FaceTime. We have Zoom happy hours with friends across the country with whom we had lost touch. My book club still meets weekly on Zoom. These connections have become sanity saving during an otherwise isolating experience.

On Gratitude

I have been overwhelmed with a sense of deep gratitude during this strange time, because the realization that I am privileged to be able to enjoy this slower pace does not escape me. I am grateful to be able to work from home and, therefore, continue to earn a steady income when many others are laid off from work. I am grateful to have a home in which to safely shelter in place and maintain social distancing when many are homeless or live in crowded conditions. I am grateful for wifi so that my children can access their school work online when many are disconnected and not receiving their rightful education. I am grateful for plenty of food when others are suffering food insecurity or hunger. I am grateful that my boys have outdoor space in which to play and get fresh air and exercise when others are stuck indoors. I am grateful for the health of my closest loved ones when so many have lost theirs. I am grateful for the wonders of nature that strengthen my faith and hope for the future.

On Transformation

Before the pandemic we were buzzing through life. And suddenly in March it all came to a halt. We experienced the death of the way of life to which we had become accustomed. In addition to the loss of thousands of lives to the virus, many are mourning the loss of jobs, human connection, and the feeling of safety. But spring proves to us that this is not the end, but rather a transformation from life as we knew it to the birth of something new. After winter always comes spring.



The experience of the past several weeks has felt like being in a cocoon: a quiet place to reflect, grow, and transform. I have had time to reflect on my priorities, which are relationships, faith, and community. I have grown as a parent by getting to know my children better and relating to them in new ways. I have transformed as an educator through learning and adapting to new strategies for connecting with, and delivering meaningful content to, my students. I have transformed my sense of self by

doing hard things and also by allowing myself to do nothing in order to just be.

On Hope

This pandemic has put a spotlight on the deep inequities in our society. My hope is that a cocoon has encased our country as a whole, and that we will take this time, not to bicker and blame, but to reflect, grow, and transform into a new and beautiful community. A place where every individual life is valued as precious. A place where we care for neighbors outside of our zip code as much as we care for the ones next door. As the shelter in place orders start to lift, may we all emerge into the world transformed into more beautiful, compassionate, and hopeful creatures. And may we be empowered to do one small or large act of compassion that will create a positive butterfly effect on society as a whole.