

What You Need to Know About The Corona Virus to Protect Yourself and Your Family

By Jed Diamond, PhD

For more information contact me at Jed@MenAlive.com. Put "Beyond Covid-19" in the subject line.

What we'll cover in this special report:

Introduction: What you need to know right away.

What qualifies Jed Diamond to offer information for dealing with Covid-19?

Places to go for updated information you can trust.

A simple understanding of Covid-19 by a doctor with experience.

Should you be wearing a mask to protect yourself and others?

Why physical distancing and hand washing can save lives.

How to Stay Safe and Not Panic: 7 Things You Can Do to Protect Your

Health and Well-Being.

Disconnection Syndrome: Why We Are Stressed, Depressed, and Afraid and How We Can Reconnect and Heal During and After the Covid-19 Crisis.

The Good News About COVID-19: This is the First Day of The Rest of Your Life.

The Meaning of the Covid-19: How to Survive and Thrive in the New Partnership Culture.

How to Avoid a Mental Health Pandemic.

Men's Mental Health Challenges in the Covid-19 Era.

Can Your Relationship Survive This Much Togetherness? 7 Things You Must Do Now.

If the Corona Virus Could Talk, What Truth Would It Tell?

What's Next: The End or the Beginning of "The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know is Possible." Will You Join Me?

Introduction

We all know that there is a world-wide pandemic that is endangering the lives of people all over the world. I've put this together to help you help yourself and the people you love. Before I share the information, there are some things you need to know right away.

- There's too much information out there. Some of it is accurate and helpful. Much of it is inaccurate and unhelpful.
- You have to decide who you want to trust to give you the best information.
- No matter who you choose to get your information from, if it's based on science it will change over time. Unlike information based on beliefs or dogma, scientific information is always changing. As more data accumulates and we learn more, recommendations get better and more helpful.

What qualifies Jed Diamond to offer information for dealing with Covid-19?

I have a master's degree in Social Work and doctorate in International Health. I've written sixteen books on various aspects of gender medicine and men's health. My doctoral level training helped me better understand the risks of infectious diseases like influenza, the modern diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, and how both were connected to diseases of the mind including anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorders, and depression.

Places to go for updated information you can trust.

World Health Organization Coronavirus Outbreak
<https://www.who.int/emergen.../diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Centers for Disease Control - re: Coronavirus
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

The Johns Hopkins Medical center offers a data visualization which is updated daily, showing infection rates, current deaths and recoveries. <https://bit.ly/2UKa0Br>.

A simple understanding of Covid-19 by a doctor with experience

CBC News medical contributor, Dr. Peter Lin, is a family physician in Toronto, Canada. Dr. Lin breaks down information on novel coronavirus (COVID-19) based on the most-current information available at the time. Dr. Lin helps explain how the virus spreads, how to minimize transmission, and who's at risk. Watch his short video here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drMw2evwMFA>.

Should you be wearing a mask to protect yourself and others?

This is a good example of the science changing with experience. First, we were told not to wear a mask if we were well. Later people were told to use a mask to protect themselves and others. If you want to delve more deeply into what is known at this time, this site can help. The scientists at Examine.com have analyzed more than 100 studies to help answer your mask questions: efficacy of different types, storage, downsides, and more.

<https://examine.com/topics/coronavirus-masks/>.

Why physical distancing and hand washing can save lives.

Most of the coronavirus maps you've probably been seeing show the number of reported COVID-19 cases. But many people who have COVID-19 — and no one knows how many — are not being counted by medical authorities. COVID-19 can have mild symptoms or even no symptoms at all, and some people are unaware they even have the disease. However, a person who contracts COVID-19 from someone who had few or no symptoms may still have serious symptoms.

Reducing the number of people who we are in physical contact with helps reduce the spread of the virus. Reducing the number of times we touch our faces, and washing well with soap regularly, keeps the virus from getting inside us where it can attack our lungs.

I found simple, yet helpful, information in this article in USA Today, "COVID-19 How coronavirus spreads so quickly and how you can slow it down."

<https://www.usatoday.com/pages/interactives/news/coronavirus-covid-spread-quickly-how-to-slow-it-down/>

How to Stay Safe and Not Panic: 7 Things You Can Do to Protect Your Health and Well-Being

I'm sure I'm not the only one who is feeling worried, anxious, and sometimes downright terrified. All the media are reporting 24/7 about the latest Corona virus news. Fortunately, I have a supportive wife and family and I've spent years helping people deal with stress. So, here are some of the practices that I am using to stay safe and to keep panic away.

1. Increase love, decrease fear.

Years ago, when Carlin and I lived in Marin County, we met Dr. Jerry Jampolsky. He had just written the book, *Love is Letting Go of Fear* that touched our hearts and healed a lot of the fear and worry that we had at the time. In a recent edition of the book, the musician Carlos Santana offered these words. "*Love is Letting Go of Fear* is the sweetest, gentlest healing melody to my heart...It has helped me find a sense of inner peace, joy, and happiness beyond what I had ever experience before—or ever thought possible."

“Wouldn’t our lives be more meaningful if we looked to what has no beginning and no ending as our reality,” Dr. Jampolsky asks at the beginning of the book. “Only Love fits this definition of the eternal.” He goes on to say, “Fear can be the most virulent and damaging virus known to humankind.”

I ask myself every day, “Is this bringing more love into my life, or is this bringing more fear?” Every day, I try and choose love, though it isn’t always easy.

2. Be aware of our negativity bias.

The neuroscientist, Dr. Rick Hanson says, “the brain is like Velcro for negative experiences but Teflon for positive ones.” In the past, it was a survival mechanism to alert us to danger in the environment. “To keep our ancestors alive,” says Dr. Hanson, “Mother Nature evolved a brain that routinely tricked them into making three mistakes: overestimating threats, underestimating opportunities, and underestimating resources (for dealing with threats and fulfilling opportunities). This is a great way to pass on gene copies, but a lousy way to promote quality of life.”

So, what can we do? “For starters,” says Hanson, “be mindful of the degree to which your brain is wired to make you afraid, wired so that you walk around with an ongoing trickle of anxiety (a flood for some) to keep you on alert. And wired to zero in on any apparent bad news in a larger stream of information.”

Knowing my brain bias, I ask myself where is the good news in all this? We’re travelling less which helps the environment. We’re staying home more and being with family and friends. We’re recognizing that everyone is connected with everyone else and if we allow it, we can increase our empathy.

3. All worry and fear is in the future. Ask yourself, “how are things *now*?”

One of the simplest and most powerful exercises I have learned over the years to calm myself and one that has helped millions of my clients is to simply ask the question, “How are things right now?” When I do, the answer is almost always “Right now things are OK.” I can scare myself if I start imagining future catastrophes that could befall me, my family, or the world. But the truth is we live in the present moment, and in the present moment things are fine.

Sometimes, it’s true that things are not fine. Sometimes we’re sick. A family member is going through a difficult life change. A close friend may be dying. There may be real dangers on the horizon. But even then, there are positive things that are happening in our lives. We can tune into what we have to be thankful for and how we can support ourselves and each other.

So, how are things right now for you?

4. Limit your media exposure, particularly mainstream T.V media.

When there is danger in the world, our negativity bias seeks out information that can prevent something bad from happening. But remember, the media has a saying: "If it bleeds, it leads." Whether it is to sell more newspapers or to increase ratings, the media has a tendency to continuously give us information about the potential dangers we face. So, we can get hooked on the latest "news."

I ask myself, is watching, listening, or reading about this helping to calm me, to reassure me, or is it feeding my panic, anxiety, and worry?

There are a lot of ways to get information. Choose ones that empower you and make you feel safer and more in control of your life. Make a plan and put it into practice. Resist the temptation to constantly look for new information. With each news report, we get a little rush of adrenaline that increases our fear.

5. Recognize the lessons that this pandemic is offering us.

Lissa Rankin, M.D. is a friend and colleague who has written extensively about health and community. She has a wonderful article on her website, ["Earth Sent Us To Time Out: A Sacred Opportunity."](#) She offers these words of wisdom. "Let's not think of this as a war. Let's think of it as an initiation, one that asks us not to polarize but to unify in service of a beautiful vision of a healthy global body. Business as usual has come to a crashing halt, but this is good and needed. Business as usual is killing the biosphere."

6. Keep connected with your friends and neighbors.

As concerns about the virus increases, more people are isolating themselves. They reason that if they limit their contact with people, they will be safer. However, humans are social beings. We need to stay connected with friends and community. But we do need to accept the we need to protect ourselves.

We check in with neighbors close by. We call and text people to stay in touch. We walk in the neighborhood, retaining distance with others. I still shop at our local market when needed and see friends and neighbors. We bow and smile and remember our heart connections, even though we aren't touching hands.

That said, we need to limit our public contact and remember to wash our hands and resist the temptation to touch our faces (Most people touch their face at least sixteen times an hour).

Who do you want to connect with? Reach out, make contact. Feel the love, care, and support, but do it safely.

7. Create a local Tribe for mutual support.

My long-time friend Bill Kauth is offering a free webinar on how to build your own personal community. We all need community, but in our chaotic, fragmented world, its often difficult to know how to actually do it. For years Bill and his wife Zoe have been building tribes and teaching others how to build their own.

They are offering a free, live, webinar to give you the information you need. [Calling in Your Tribe: Creating Your Personal Heart-to-Heart Community](#). They also offer a follow-up paid 7-week online course called, "[Time for Tribe](#)."

I hope you find some value that can keep you safe and connected. If you found this article helpful, check out my blog, [here](#).

[Disconnection Syndrome: Why We Are Stressed, Depressed, and Afraid and How We Can Reconnect and Heal During and After the Covid-19 Crisis](#)

In her recent TED talk viewed by more than two million people in just a week, Global health expert Alanna Shaikh [talks about the current status of the 2019 coronavirus outbreak](#) and what this can teach us about the epidemics yet to come. She talks about the underlying causes of the pandemic and describes the various ways humans are disconnected from the natural world. "It's a result of the way human beings are interacting with our planet," she says. "Part of it is climate change and the way a warming climate makes the world more hospitable to viruses."

Brother Richard Hendrick, a Capuchin Franciscan living in Ireland posted this poem on March 14, 2020 on how we can recognize our deep connections, even during these challenging times. He calls it *Lockdown*.

*Yes there is fear.
Yes there is isolation.
Yes there is panic buying.
Yes there is sickness.
Yes there is even death.
But,
They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise
You can hear the birds again.
They say that after just a few weeks of quiet
The sky is no longer thick with fumes
But blue and grey and clear.
They say that in the streets of Assisi
People are singing to each other
across the empty squares,
keeping their windows open
so that those who are alone*

*may hear the sounds of family around them.
They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland
Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.
Today a young woman I know
is busy spreading fliers with her number
through the neighbourhood
So that the elders may have someone to call on.
Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples
are preparing to welcome
and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary
All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting
All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way
All over the world people are waking up to a new reality*

*To how big we really are.
To how little control we really have.
To what really matters.
To Love.
So we pray and we remember that
Yes there is fear.
But there does not have to be hate.
Yes there is isolation.
But there does not have to be loneliness.
Yes there is panic buying.
But there does not have to be meanness.
Yes there is sickness.
But there does not have to be disease of the soul
Yes there is even death.
But there can always be a rebirth of love.
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.
Today, breathe.
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic
The birds are singing again
The sky is clearing,
Spring is coming,
And we are always encompassed by Love.
Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square,
Sing*

The principles of Functional Medicine can help us stay healthy so that our immune systems are working well to protect us from all diseases. In their new book, *Brain Wash*, David Perlmutter, MD and Austin Perlmutter, MD say that we have become a *culture of disconnection*. “We walk around with our heads down, fixated on our devices, avoiding ideas that differ from our own, while confronting constant messages telling us what to do (eat more, buy more, post more, be ‘liked’ more).”

They go on to say, “Participating in our modern consumerist existence is physically changing our brains. How, exactly? It is cutting off access to the highly evolved part of the brain that lets us see the big picture and make well thought-out decisions. Simultaneously, it is strengthening the pathways that make us impulsive, anxious, fearful, and constantly craving a quick fix.”

There are two brain areas, the *prefrontal cortex* and the *amygdala*, that must be in balance if we are to function well in our lives.

The large prefrontal cortex, sitting just inside the front of our skulls, is the most recently evolved part of the brain. The doctors say, “It is credited with higher-order brain functions such as:

- Our ability to plan for the future.
- Express empathy.
- See things from the point of view of another.
- Make thoughtful decisions.
- Engage in positive social behavior—

Basically, all the things that make us human.

“The amygdala is the control center of the threat-response and threat-interpretation system. It modulates our memories of threatening events, real or perceived. The amygdala helps record real or perceived threats as well as other emotion-filled experiences so that we can recognize similar events in the future.”

The amygdala is part of the older brain, or *Limbic brain*. It’s part of our mammalian heritage and reacts instantly to keep us alive at times of danger. But problems occur when the amygdala operates without the guidance of our prefrontal cortex, as too often happens in our modern world. “But here’s the important lesson,” the doctors note. **“The circuit in the amygdala can be hacked or altered even in an otherwise healthy brain. And when its tinkered with, big problems ensue.”**

Our brains are literally being rewired in ways that are not in our best interests. “This rewiring leads us to spend our time and money on things that do not bring us long-term happiness,” say the doctors. “It leaves us constantly unsatisfied. And that’s exactly where corporate interests want us to be, because it leads to higher profits.”

The disconnection syndrome, they say, leads us to mindless activity, loneliness, chronic inflammation, instant gratification, narcissism, poor relationships, chronic stress, impulsivity, and anxiety. It can also contribute to panic when we're addressing a problem frightening as a world-wide pandemic.

What We Can Do to Reconnect and Heal:

We certainly need to protect ourselves from getting infected from others who may have the virus. But we also can protect ourselves by boosting our immune systems.

After detailing the science behind these recommendations, the doctors offer the following "Brain Wash for Health" program.

First: Digital Detox

"First and foremost," the doctors say, "you need to create barriers between your brain and the incessant influence of digital distraction. This requires striking a new balance. The idea is not to completely cut technology out of your life. Instead you will overhaul your use of digital devices."

Second: Practice Empathy Through Gratitude

"Reflecting on the positive aspects of your life and the people you care about is an exercise in mindfulness and empathy, and studies show that more gratitude means more empathy."

Third: Nature Therapy

"We understand that most people don't live within walking distance of an expansive forest, but do what is possible." I find just walking through the neighborhood, seeing the sky, the trees, the clouds, listening to birds, smelling the flowers—all can be healing.

Fourth: Figuring Out Food

"Dietary change has to start in the places where you have the most control: kitchen and pantry." Most of us know what's good for us. I'm taking this time to eat healthier, including more home cooked meals.

Fifth: Successful Shut-Eye

"Who would have thought that those hours of semi-unconsciousness at night could be so valuable? The research on the health benefits of sleep is absolutely stunning." We can learn better sleep hygiene and it's well worth the effort.

Sixth: Embracing Exercise

“Getting consistent exercise may seem daunting. The idea is not to force yourself into something disagreeable but to see exercise as a form of medicine that preserves your brain and body while improving your mood and decision making.” I’m exercising at home and doing it three times a day. Feels great.

Seventh: Medicate with Meditation

“Meditation is one of the best ways to debug your mind. We’re not recommending a specific type of mediation.” Find what works for you. Staring out slowly and doing it regularly can be of great benefit. I’m meditating more, reflecting, journaling.

Eighth: Increase your Social Bonds with People

“Your interactions with other people are key in helping you escape disconnection syndrome. You’ll benefit from this activity by spending at least ten minutes of unbroken time connecting with another person each day.” You can stay safe and also connected.

For more information about their book and their program, check it out [here](#). If you like this article and would like to read more, please visit my [blog](#).

The Good News About COVID-19: This is the First Day of The Rest of Your Life

Like everyone in the world, I’m concerned about Covid-19. Both my wife, Carlin, and I are in the high-risk group being over 75 years of age. I’ve also had respiratory problems throughout my life and am recovering from a bout of pneumonia a month ago, so we’re following all the guidelines and staying safe. Being a writer, I’ve been busy offering articles like these that focuses on what I’m learning that I feel can be helpful to all. I’ll give you the links to the other articles at the end of this piece.

Why do I say, “this is the first day of the rest of your life?” I believe this world-wide pandemic is the most significant event any of us will experience in our lifetimes and it marks a major turning point in all our lives. Who we were and what we did before will be different from who we are and what we do now.

Most of us have been inundated with “news” and overwhelmed with fear. We go in and out of panic depending on something we hear or an image we see. I find it helpful to remember these [five simple facts published by the Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#).

1. Diseases can make anyone sick regardless of their race or ethnicity.
2. For most people, the immediate risk of becoming seriously ill from the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be low.

3. Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people.
4. There are simple things you can do to help keep yourself and others healthy.
5. You can help stop COVID-19 by knowing the signs and symptoms.

Is there really any good news about a world-wide pandemic that, as I'm writing this on March 22, 2020, shows **322,625 active cases and 13,746 deaths worldwide**? The answer is "yes." The same, [authoritative site](#) that offers these sobering statistics tells us the following:

Is there really any good news about a world-wide pandemic that, as I'm writing this on April 12, 2020, shows **1,302,329 active cases and 113,266 deaths worldwide**? The answer is "yes." The same site that offers these sobering statistics tells us the following:

Of the 1,302,329 active cases of people currently infected, 1,251,568 (96%) are mild while 50,761 (4%) are serious or critical.

Of the 534,636 closed cases, 421,370 (79%) recovered and were discharged, while 113,266 (21% died.) Should you get the virus and get sick enough to need help, nearly 80% will survive.

Remember, too, that most people who are infected with COVID-19 don't become "active cases," because their symptoms are mild and they never get tested. The active cases tend to be the most serious ones.

We shouldn't minimize the severity of COVID-19 or fail to care about those who become ill and are suffering. We should take every precaution the experts recommend to protect ourselves. But, neither should we focus only on the negatives. If you're like most humans, we tend to focus on the worst that can happen, rather than the best. Am I right?

It turns out, there's a reason why we focus more on the negative than the positive and it's built into the way our brains evolved. "The brain is bad at learning from good experiences but good at learning from bad ones," says neuropsychologist Rick Hanson. "In a scientific paper famously titled '**Bad Is Stronger Than Good**,' Roy Baumeister and colleagues listed many ways that the human brain has a 'negativity bias.' We continually look for negative information, over-react to it, and then quickly store these reactions in brain structure. For example, we learn faster from pain than from pleasure, and negative interactions have more impact on a relationship than positive ones. **In effect, our brain is like Velcro for the bad but Teflon for the good.**"

Knowing the negativity bias of the human brain can allow us to choose *positivity and love* more often and *negativity and fear*.

I'd like to suggest some additional positive things we can think about as we deal with the challenges of staying home and staying safe.

The first thing we can do is to change our mindset from fear to love. As brother Richard Hendrick reminds us. “Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic. The birds are singing again. The sky is clearing. Spring is coming. And we are always encompassed by Love.”

The second thing we can do is to acknowledge that an old system is dying and a new one is being born. Dr. Eisler is a social systems scientist, cultural historian, attorney, consultant, and speaker. Her work has transformed organizations, policies, and people worldwide, and her book [*Nurturing Our Humanity: How Domination and Partnership Shape Our Brains, Lives, and Future*](#) (co-authored with anthropologist Douglas Fry,) shows how to construct a more equitable, sustainable, and less violent world based on partnership rather than domination.

The third thing we can do is to recognize that the current crisis offers an opportunity for us to choose Partnership instead of Domination and help create “the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible,” as my colleague Charles Eisenstein puts it. At the Center for Partnership Studies Dr. Eisler asks a simple, yet profound question: “Are you tired of ineffective, band-aid approaches to violence, environmental destruction, economic inequality, and other seemingly intractable problems?” For those who are ready for change, Dr. Eisler encourages us to join the Partnership Systems movement today.

The fourth thing we can do is to reflect on our own lives. What is dying in us and what is wanting to be born? What do we want to release? What do we want to bring into our lives? It is a time of new beginnings. Like everyone around the world, I’ve been spending more time close to home, with breaks to walk outside and enjoy the birds, the trees, the rain, and the blue sky.

It’s been a great time to reflect, write in my journal (which I haven’t done for years), to eat healthier, exercise, meditate, talk to friends and family. I’m also looking ahead. What do I want to do with the life that is given to me? I’ve been thinking of old friends, colleagues, and teachers who have offered great guidance and wisdom over the years.

One person I’ve been thinking a lot about is Angeles Arrien, a good friend, colleague, and teacher who died in 2014. I remember her saying, “Throughout our lives from the cradle to the grave, we have two companions that accompany us. On our left our companion is *Death* and death asks us a question. **“Are you using the great gift of life well?”** On our right is another companion, *Destiny*, who asks us, **“Are you doing what you’ve come here to do?”**

I’m thinking of this time as a “reset.” Just as the whole society is being turned upside down and has opportunities to reset and move in a new direction, this is a time where each of us can reflect on our lives and move in new directions that may serve us better.

The fifth thing we can do is to engage the Diamond Live challenge. For more than fifty years now I have been helping people address the four points of the diamond:

- Point 1: Am I living a fully authentic life? Am I being the best me I can be?

- Point 2: Am I loving deeply and well? Am I learning how to fully love myself and others?
- Point 3: Am I engaging the significant social movements of my time?
- Point 4: Am I following my calling to offer my unique gifts to make the world a little better place for our children, grandchildren, and future generations.

The world-wide movement to address Covid-19 is the first social movement in our lifetime to bring the entire world together.

The sixth thing we can do is learn there are new ways our health-care system can serve us. Most all of us use the healthcare system from time to time. We also recognize that in many cases the system doesn't work well and nowadays it's healthier to reach out to a doctor online. Welcome to Ro, "The Patient Company." Ro is a patient-driven telehealth company that aims to be the patient's first call for all of their healthcare needs. Using technology, Ro empowers physicians to provide high-quality, affordable care when and where patients need it most. Check them out [here](#).

The seventh thing we can do is to consider how our calling can allow us to make a good living once we've recovered from the Covid-19 challenge. Many of us, like myself, run, or are part, of a small business. I believe that many aspects of "big business" are no longer viable and small business will become the wave of the future. My colleague, Steve Dailey, founder of Entrepreneur Excellence, offers five strategies for "Pandemic Survival for the Small Business Person." Check them out [here](#).

The Meaning of the Covid-19: How to Survive and Thrive in the New Partnership Culture

With the sudden reality of Covid-19 and the world-wide pandemic, people are understandably frightened. It's like we went to bed one night in a world that was familiar and a life that made sense and we woke up in a totally different world where everything was different. This is the fourth in a series of articles that I hope will help you make sense of this new world and how you can both survive and thrive.

Seth Godin's recent blog offers some helpful advice. "Panic loves company," he says, "And yet calm is our practical, efficient, rational alternative... If panic is helpful, of course you should bring it on. But it rarely is. Instead: Curate your incoming. Stay off Twitter. Do the work instead. Whatever needs doing most is better than panic. Being up-to-date on the news is a trap and a scam. Five minutes a day is all you need."

I'll admit, I go in and out of panic. It's difficult not to get caught up checking the latest media reports. It helps if you have time to prepare. I've been seeing this coming for twenty-five years now and I have a clearer picture of what we're facing, what it means, and how we can get through this together.

The reality of this massive shift in the world was first brought home to me during a sweat lodge ceremony at a men's conference in 1995. The sweat lodge is an ancient ceremony

present in cultures throughout the world, and is often used as a time for cleansing, prayer, and for asking for guidance or visions about the future. In the fourth round of the sweat lodge ceremony the lodge became so hot that many of the men were forced to crawl out. I was sitting at the very back in the hottest spot. I wasn't aware of the heat because I was transported by a vision:

We are all on a huge ocean liner. It is the Ship of Civilization. Everything that we know and have ever known is on the ship. People are born and die. Goods and services are created, wars are fought, and elections are held. Species come into being and face extinction. The Ship steams on and on and there is no doubt that it will continue on its present course forever.

There are many decks on the ship starting way down in the boiler room where the poorest and grimmest toil to keep the ship going. As you ascend the decks things get lighter and easier. The people who run the ship have suites on the very top deck. Their job, as they see it, is to keep the ship going and keep those on the lower decks in their proper places. Since they are at the top, they are sure that they deserve to have the best that the ship has to offer.

Everyone on the lower decks aspires to get up to the next deck and hungers to get to the very top. That's the way it is. That's the way it has always been. That's the way it will always be.

However, there are a few people who realize that something very strange is happening. What they come to know is that the Ship of Civilization is sinking. At first, like everyone else, they can't believe it. The Ship has been afloat since time before time. It is the best of the best. That it could sink is unthinkable. Nonetheless, they are sure the Ship is sinking.

They try and warn the people, but no one believes them. The Ship cannot be sinking and anyone who thinks so must be out of their mind. When they persist in trying to warn the people of what they are facing, those in charge of the Ship silence them and lock them up. The Ship's media keeps grinding out news stories describing how wonderful the future will be.

The captains of the Ship smile and wave, and promise prosperity for all. But water is beginning to seep in from below. The higher the water rises, the more frightened the people become and the more frantic they scramble to get to the upper decks. Some believe it is the end of the world and actually welcome the prospect of the destruction of life as we know it. They believe it is the fulfillment of religious prophecies. Others become more and more irritable, angry, and depressed and use alcohol, drugs, and other forms of self-medication to escape the pain.

But as the water rises, those who have been issuing the warnings can no longer be silenced. More and more escape confinement and lead the people towards the lifeboats. Though there are boats enough for all, many people are reluctant to leave the Ship of Civilization. "Things may look bad now, but surely they will get better soon," they say to each other.

Nevertheless, the Ship is sinking. Many people go over the side and are lowered down to the boats. As they descend, they are puzzled to see lettering on the side of the ship, T-I-T-A-N-I-C. When they reach the lifeboats, many are frightened and look for someone who looks like they know what to do. They'd like to ride with those people.

However, they find that each person must get in their own boat and row away from the Ship in their own direction. If they don't get away from the Ship as soon as possible they will be pulled under with it. Though each person must row their own boat, they must stay connected to others. When everyone, each in their own boats rowing in their own direction, reaches a certain spot a new kind of network will emerge... It will be the basis for a new way of life that will replace the life that was lived on the old Ship of Civilization.

I slowly came back to the present and found myself alone at the back of the Sweat Lodge. I wasn't quite sure what had happened, but the vision was clear in my mind and has remained so ever since. As a scientist, I don't usually put much store in "visions." Yet, over the years I have come to trust the intuitive glimpses into the future that many people see. In the years since the vision, a number of people from different backgrounds have validated the essentials of what I experienced.

What's the Meaning of the Vision as We Deal with the Covid-19 Crisis?

1. In the vision I saw two systems—*The Ship of Civilization* and *The Connected Lifeboats*.

Although the Ship of Civilization is been here for a long-time it has some fatal flaws. It is hierarchical and separates people by class. Those at the top have a lot of the good things in life. Those who are not at the top work hard, but get less and less. The primary problem with the Ship of Civilization is that it wasn't built to last. It is slowly sinking.

Those who recognize the danger try and warn others, but are not believed. Those who see the danger, get off the sinking Ship into lifeboats. As each person rows away, they create a new way of life that is more egalitarian, where people are linked rather than ranked.

This fits with what Riane Eisler, author of the *Chalice and the Blade* and with Douglas Fry, *Nurturing Our Humanity: How Domination and Partnership Shape Our Brains, Lives, and Future*, calls the *Domination system* (the sinking Ship) and the *Partnership system* (boats of life).

2. The Partnership system is our basic human heritage. The Domination system is relatively recent.

Anthropologists tell us that our evolutionary history of humans goes back at least a million years. What we have come to call civilization goes back around 10,000 years, when we began to domesticate plants and animals. So, our Partnership past lasted for 990,000 years. The Dominator period lasted about 10,000 years (1% of our human history) and now we have a chance to get back to our Partnership roots.

Biologist Jared Diamond, in a 1987 article in *Discover* magazine, called Civilization “the worst mistake in the history of the human race.” Diamond says, “The adoption of agriculture, supposedly our most decisive step toward a better life, was in many ways a catastrophe from which we have never recovered. With agriculture came the gross social and sexual inequality, the disease and despotism, that curse our existence.”

I would add that it isn’t agriculture, per se, that is catastrophic, but the dominator system that holds the belief that humans are entitled to take whatever they want from the earth and all other life on the planet must serve human needs or die. It is a fearful, fear producing mentality that leads to addiction.

3. COVID-19 is our final wake-up call to change our ways or it is the human species that will die.

According to paleontologist and evolutionary biologist, Nick Longrich, “Nine species of humans once walked the earth. Now there is just one.” As frightening as this Corona virus is, we will recover. Biologist, Bruce Lipton, PhD., was asked recently “will the COVID-19 epidemic go on and on?” He answered, unequivocally. “The answer is clearly NO!” says Lipton. “As is evidenced by the almost complete cessation of new COVID-19 cases in China and South Korea, the epidemic will come to an end.”

The question is, will humans see this as another inconvenience and once it’s over go back to business as usual? Or will we change our ways? The truth is that the Dominator system is not sustainable. We can no longer continue to heat up our planet, use more and more of the Earth’s resources, and see ourselves as a separate species that can ignore the rules of nature.

Thomas Berry was a priest, a “geologian,” and a historian of religions. He spoke eloquently to our connection to the Earth and the consequences of our failure to remember we are one member in the community of life. “We never knew enough. Nor were we sufficiently intimate with all our cousins in the great family of the earth. Nor could we listen to the various creatures of the earth, each telling its own story. **The time has now come, however, when we will listen or we will die.**”

4. We have a unique opportunity to return to our partnership roots.

This is a transformative time for those who are ready change and embrace a positive future. In their book, *Spontaneous Evolution: Our Positive Future (and a way to get there from here)*, Bruce Lipton and Steve Bhaerman say we are ready for “A Whole New Story.”

They continue, “If you find it hard to imagine that we can ever get from the crises that we are facing now to a more loving and functional world, consider the tale of another world in transition. Imagine you are a single cell among millions that comprise a growing caterpillar. The

structure around you have been operating like a well-oiled machine, and the larva world has been creeping along predictably.

“Then one day, the machine begins to shudder and shake. The system begins to fail. Cells begin to commit suicide. There is a sense of darkness and impending doom.

“From within the dying population, a new breed of cells begins to emerge, called *imaginal cells*. Clustering in community, they devise a plan to create something entirely new from the wreckage. Out of the decay arises a great flying machine—a butterfly—that enables the survivor cells to escape from the ashes and experience a beautiful world, far beyond imagination.

“Here is the amazing thing: the caterpillar and the butterfly have the exact same DNA. They are the same organism but are receiving and responding to a different organizing signal.”

So, my friends, the choice is ours. This is the time where we can stick with the Ship, which is familiar, but is sinking. Or we can take the risk to become one of the imaginal cells who get into the boats of life and create the new Partnership Culture. I hope you join us.

If you find these articles valuable, please leave a comment and visit me [here](#).

How to Avoid a Mental Health Pandemic

I’ve been working as a mental health professional since I graduated from U.C. Berkeley in 1968, but my interest began much earlier. When I was five years old my father had “a nervous breakdown,” which is what they called a mental health crisis back in 1949. He had become increasingly depressed because he couldn’t find work to support his family. In desperation he took an overdose of sleeping pills and was committed to Camarillo State Mental Hospital. Though he survived physically, our lives were never the same. I grew up wondering what happened to my father, whether it would happen to me, and what I could do to help other families avoid the devastation that his absence had on our lives.

I went on to college and later medical school. I had planned to be a psychiatrist, but found the medical training I was getting left out the social and community aspects of mental health. I dropped out and later went back to school getting a Master’s degree in Social Work and a PhD in International Health. My doctoral level training helped me better understand the risks of infectious diseases like influenza, the modern diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, and how both were connected to diseases of the mind including anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorders, and depression. My dissertation examined the different ways men and women experience depression. My findings were published as a book, *Male vs. Female Depression: Why Men Act Out and Women Act In*.

Now we are in the midst of a world-wide pandemic and millions of people all over the world are dealing with Covid-19. As I write this today (April 11, 2020) there are 1,760,978 confirmed cases world-wide and 519,453 cases in the United States according to [Johns Hopkins University Corona Virus Resource Center](https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/) (<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/>). All experts agree that these numbers will continue to rise and these simple words, from doctors on the front line, remind us of our responsibilities:



As challenging as the Covid-19 medical challenge is, there may an even bigger challenge we will soon face unless we take action now. “We are in the midst of an epidemic and possibly pandemic of anxiety and distress,” says Robert T. London, M.D.

If you, like me, have suffered from anxiety and depression in your life, the Covid-19 pandemic is likely making these problems worse. You're not alone. Andrew Solomon is a professor of medical clinical psychology at Columbia University Medical Center. Here's what he says in a recent opinion article in the *New York Times*: "For nearly 30 years — most of my adult life — I have struggled with depression and anxiety. While I've never felt alone in such commonplace afflictions — the family secret everyone shares — I now find I have more fellow sufferers than I could have ever imagined. Within weeks, the familiar symptoms of mental illness have become universal reality."

It certainly makes sense to mobilize our medical health professionals to deal with the Covid-19 crisis. Though the statistics of illness and death are grim, most health-care professional believe that one country, one city, one community after another will reach its peak, assuming we continue to practice physical distancing, and things will get better. Eventually, there will be a vaccine to prevent future outbreaks.

But how do we deal with the immediate and long-term effects of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorders? We're rightly focused on getting protective masks and other gear for doctors and nurses on the front lines, but what are we doing to help them deal with the crippling emotional challenges they must face every day?

Mental health has often been seen as a less important than physical health. Yet, from my years of experience, I don't believe we can separate the two. When I've been physically sick, as I was recently, with pneumonia, I was also anxious and depressed. And when I've been anxious, depressed, and stressed, it impacts my physical health.

In the midst of the crisis New York's Governor Andrew Cuomo talked about the importance of mental health services. "No one's really talking about this. We're all concerned about the immediate critical need, the life and death of the immediate situation, but don't underestimate the emotional trauma that people are feeling and the emotional health issues."

The New York governor has taken the lead in this area and mental health professionals have responded. The governor said that anyone currently struggling with their mental health can call the hotline and schedule a free appointment with a professional. "Again, God bless the 6,000 mental health professionals, who are doing this 100% free, on top of whatever they have to do in their normal practice," Cuomo said. "I am sure in their normal practice they're busy, this is really an extraordinary step by them."

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), 1 in 5 people in the U.S. suffer from mental illness, and 1 in 25 from severe mental illness. Social distancing, which is now required in many regions across the country to slow the spread of the virus, can complicate and exacerbate some mental illnesses, including anxiety and depression. Dr. Ken Duckworth, medical director of NAMI, says. "So, if you already have an anxiety disorder, or obsessive-compulsive disorder, or unstable housing, or you're already isolated, this is going to compound your problems."

Every community should be addressing mental health issues now. Those that get ahead of the curve will find it will help everyone now and in years to come. In my own community, I'm seeing an increase of people coming to me with irritability and anger issues. There seems to also be an increase in relationship stresses which can lead to domestic violence. Too much togetherness can be stressful.

The opposite is true as well. Social isolation generates at least as much escalation of mental illness as does fear of the virus itself. Julianne Holt-Lunstad, a psychologist, found that social isolation is twice as harmful to a person's physical health as obesity. Researchers have determined that "a lonely person's immune system responds differently to fighting viruses, making them more likely to develop an illness."

"You might feel more on edge than usual, angry, helpless or sad. You might notice that you are more frustrated with others or want to completely avoid any reminders of what is happening," said the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). "It's important to note that we are not helpless in light of current news events."

We may be physically distancing, but we don't have to be socially distancing. Reach out to someone. If you're feeling stressed and depressed, or having any difficulties, reach out. If you're feeling OK, reach out to others who may be having a more difficult time. We're all in this together and we need to stay connected.

If you found this helpful, you can read more on my blog, <https://menalive.com/the-blog/>.

Men's Mental Health Challenges in the Covid-19 Era

I'm guessing that few people in the world had ever heard about Covid-19 until a few months ago. Now everyone has heard and most of us are scared. We ask ourselves, "Will I get it? Will someone I love get it? Will one of us die? When will it end?"

There really are two pandemics we're dealing with. First, is the spread of the *virus* and its impact on our physical health. Second, is the spread of the *fear and panic* and its impact on our mental health. For me, both of these fears are up close and personal. I'm in the high-risk group for getting the virus, getting sick, and dying:

- I'm older (age 76).
- I've had chronic lung problems most of my life.
- I'm a man.

I'm also in the high-risk group for having mental and emotional problems associated with Covid-19.

- I've suffered from depression all my life.
- I worry a lot and suffer from anxiety.
- When I get stressed, I get angry, which often pushes away those I need for emotional support.

Let me say at the outset that we can't separate physical health from mental health. When I'm down with the flu, I'm also often sad and depressed. When I'm dealing with anxiety, anger, and depression, my physical health suffers as well.

In addressing the risks associated with Covid-19, most people are aware that older people and those with other health problems are more likely to become sicker and die if they contract the virus. However, fewer people seem to be aware that *being male* seems to put us at higher risk.

White House coronavirus coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx recently pointed out this "concerning trend" after looking at statistics in Italy, where footage of hospital intensive care units showed bed after bed of older men breathing with the help of ventilators. "The mortality in males seems to be twice that of females in every age group," said Dr. Birx.

When Italy recently offered statistics on deaths, they noted that 28% of the deaths were female, while 72% of those who had died were men, according to a report by the BBC. One study put the number even higher, with men making up 80% of people who had died of Covid-19 in Italy.

I've been helping men improve their mental health for fifty years now. Well, even longer when I remember my father who took an overdose of sleeping pills when I was five years old when his depression intensified because he was unable to make a living supporting this family. Here were the words he wrote in his journal just days prior to overdosing and being committed to Camarillo State Mental Hospital, north of our home in Los Angeles.

“October 28th: Your flesh crawls, your scalp wrinkles when you look around and see good writers, established writers, writers with credits a block long, unable to sell, unable to find work. Yes, it's enough to make anyone, blanch, turn pale and sicken.

“October 30th: Faster, faster, faster, I walk. I plug away looking for work, anything to support my family. I try, try, try, try, try. I always try and never stop.

“November 2nd: A hundred failures, an endless number of failures, until now, my confidence, my hope, my belief in myself, has run completely out. Middle aged, I stand and gaze ahead, numb, confused, and desperately worried. All around me I see the young in spirit, the young in heart, with ten times my confidence, twice my youth, ten times my fervor, twice my education.

“I see them all, a whole army of them, battering at the same doors I'm battering, trying in the same field I'm trying. Yes, on a Sunday morning in early November, my hope and my life stream are both running desperately low, so low, so stagnant, that I hold my breath in fear, believing that the dark, blank curtain is about to descend.”

In addition to being depressed, my father was also angry. His anger pushed my mother away emotionally and he kept his pain bottled up inside. He survived the suicide attempt, but our lives were never the same. I went with my uncle every week to visit my father, but he got worse and worse. I'm sure my decision to dedicate my life to helping men and their families deal with these issues began during the months I visited my father and was unable to help him.

We know now that the suicide rate for men is 3 to 18 times higher than it is for women and it increases with age. The current crisis not only impacts men's physical and emotional health but it interferes with men's ability to work and to love, the two cornerstones, I believe, of men's physical and emotional health.

There is hope on the horizon. The bad news is that the Covid-19 virus has spread throughout the world. The good news is that there are millions of men and women that are working to develop a vaccine and find treatments that can help those who get sick. There are also more and more programs dedicated to helping men and the families who love them.

Here are some things I've found to be important in addressing men's mental health.

1. Men have an aversion anything “mental.”

I grew up with all the stereotypes of people who had “mental problems:”

- Nuts
- Psycho
- Looney tunes.

- Weird
- Freak

Although the stereotypes impact women and men, men are particularly sensitive to anything that implies they are “less than a man” or have a problem they can’t control.

Solution: I’ve learned that “mental problems” are as common and treatable as physical problems. It’s manly to acknowledge what’s going on inside me. I felt free when I began talking about my own depression and anxiety. And so have millions of other men including Dwayne “the rock” Johnson, Trevor Noah, Brad Pitt, Bruce Springsteen, and Terry Bradshaw, to name a few. Talk about your feelings. The truth will set you free.

2. Men are taught we must be tough and never show weakness.

This is part of the “man-box” culture so many of us grew up in and I discuss in my new book, [12 Rules for Good Men](#). We are taught that real men don’t acknowledge pain, physical or mental. I remember a cartoon. A man and woman are sitting across from each other. The woman sticks a fork into the bridge of the man’s nose. He sits impassively as though nothing has happened. The caption reads, “That’s what I like about you Louie, you’re tough.”

Solution: Denying our pain and being unfeeling when we are hurt or afraid is not a sign of manly strength. It’s a kind of masochism where strength is measured by how much pain we can carry without acknowledging it. Pain is a signal that something is wrong. Let it out. Tell the truth. Be kind to ourselves.

3. When men are depressed, we often cover our unhappiness with irritability and anger.

There’s a quote by comedian Elayne Boosler who captures a truth about men’s mental health. “When women are depressed, they eat or go shopping,” she says. “Men invade another country.” I might add, or they yell at their wives and children or engage in risky and harmful behaviors that hurt themselves.

Solution: Don’t let anger harm yourself and your family. I realized I was angry all my life and a lot of the anger came out when I was really stressed, depressed, and unhappy. I finally learned to deal with my anger more effectively, learned to help others, and wrote a best-selling book, [The Irritable Male Syndrome: Understanding and Managing the 4 Key Causes of Depression and Aggression](#). If this is an issue for you or a family member, check it out.

If you found this article helpful, please visit me [here](#) to read more helpful articles. This work is my calling. Your feedback and comments help me know what is most helpful to you.

Can Your Relationship Survive This Much Togetherness? 7 Things You Must Do Now

As someone who has worked hard all my life, I've often talked about wanting to spend more time with my wife and family. But I never thought it would happen this way or that we'd be required to stay locked up together "until death do we part." Well, hopefully, it won't be forever. But forced togetherness can put a great deal of strain on any relationship. When you add in all the uncertainties and fears around Covid-19, it can make things downright incendiary.

I recently received an email from a fellow marriage and family counselor. He said he was having problems in his own relationship and was hearing the same thing from many of his clients. "My wife is freaking out about the threat of the virus, while I'm taking it in stride. We both follow the precautions, but she seems anxious and fearful all the time. We've gotten into fights about how concerned we should be and whether it's helpful or harmful to stay up on the latest news reports. My male clients seem to be having similar problems with their wives. Do you think it's a male-female thing?"

"From an evolutionary science, it makes sense that women as a group would be more concerned about taking care of themselves and their families while males would tend to be less stressed and worried," I told him. "But that's based on averages, not true of all men or women. I know many families where the men are more freaked out and the women are taking things in stride (That's true in our home, where I tend to get hooked on fear and panic and my wife, Carlin, is a more stabilizing influence). But clearly the threat of Covid-19 is placing increased stress on all couples."

As a marriage and family counselor I know that even under normal circumstances there is often conflict, confusion, and misunderstandings in our intimate relationships. But now we are facing unprecedented stresses and strains from the following:

- A world-wide pandemic that is killing more people every day.
- World-wide media that keeps our anxieties and fears stirred up with the latest horror stories, in addition to sharing news.
- Conflicting information and misinformation that increases our fear and confusion.
- The source of the potential danger is other people—our friends, neighbors, employees, and even those who are closest to us.
- Since we can't see the danger and we don't know who is infected, we have to be wary of everyone.
- Nearly everyone, except for the very rich, worry about their financial security and whether they will have enough to pay the bills.
- Medical staff on the front line don't have the protective gear they need and everyone worries about their own safety and the safety of others should they need hospitalization.
- We wonder whether things will ever get back to normal and how we can take care of our families during these times where we have too much togetherness and not enough space to breathe and connect with others.

Here are some things you can do to nurture your relationship. Remember, it is the thing you love and most and the best protection you will ever have against the stresses of a world turned upside down.

1. This is a threat to yourself and your family and you must deal with your anxiety.

“Anxiety is rampant and people are potentially taking some of that anxiety out on each other,” says Julie Schwartz Gottman, who cofounded the Gottman Institute and wrote several bestselling books with her husband John. The first step is to recognize your anxiety and know that the irritation you might feel with your partner is not really about them, but about your anxiety, fears, and worries.

2. Talk to each other about your feelings.

At times of stress, many of us, particularly men, try and be strong and keep our “negative” feelings to ourselves. Yet, the feelings will come out in some way. You can’t keep them bottled up like a pressure cooker or the lid will blow off. This is a time to be open and share our concerns and worries. Hearing and sharing feelings bring us closer together.

3. Deal with anger constructively.

When we’re stressed we often express one of two feelings. Men often express *irritation* or *anger*. Women often express *anxiety* and *hurt*. Writing out our feelings or even talking them out to ourselves can help us keep from taking them out on our partner. Often the feelings of one trigger feelings in the other. Men may get irritated and angry which triggers anxiety and hurt in his partner. Or a woman may express her hurt and anxiety and trigger a man’s anger irritation and anger (I’ve discounted my book, [The Irritable Male Syndrome: Understanding and Managing the 4 Key Causes of Depression and Aggression](#) during these trying times.)

Often underneath the anger or hurt is *fear*. Unprocessed anger can undermine the trust in a relationship and cause things to deteriorate quickly. My colleague, John Schinnerer, PhD is an expert in handling stress. He offers the following insights about our time together and the pressures that build up:

- First week of isolation - It’s a vacation. This is new and exciting.
- Second week - It starts to wear on us.
- Third week - Our irritation and resentment build.
- Fourth week - The unity and resiliency once shown begins to give way to anger, panic and, in some families, increased domestic violence.

In a recent *Time* magazine article by Belinda Luscombe she says, “After COVID-19 cases began to subside in China and people were able to go out again, there was a reported surge in

divorce filings. Even now, domestic violence appears to be on the rise.” Similar responses have been reported from all over the world.

I recently did a podcast with Dr. John Schinnerer for *The Evolved Caveman* that explored the ways that Covid-19 is impacting our lives and relationships. Check it out [here](#).

4. If you have children, be patient, be kind, and take time for yourself and your partner.

Under the best of circumstances, children at home when they would normally be at school is an added stress. But this is unprecedented. Kids will try our patience, push our buttons, and drive us up the wall. To survive and thrive during these times you have to get creative (Here’s a [clip](#) of one of the activities my son, Jemal, created with his son Jonovan).

Taking care of children is important, but you can’t do it unless you are taking care of yourself and your partnership. Find time for yourself. Find time where you and your partner can relax and reconnect. Be good to yourself and be good to your partner.

5. Talk about your money worries.

Unless you’re very rich (and even the very rich worry about money) you have concerns about finances. Again, most of us have concerns, even under the best of circumstances. But this shut-down Tsunami has overwhelmed everyone. Whatever your circumstances, talking about your worries and fears can relieve some of the pressure. Trying to keep it all inside because you don’t want to worry your spouse or family just increases the worry and fear.

One of the benefits of a financial crisis that impacts everyone is that the government is stepping up to help. We have to support those who want the money to be directed towards the people who need it the most, but there is money support coming and those in need will benefit. We are not alone in this. We all need help.

6. Get out and walk.

Most people can get outside and walk. We need to be safe and protect ourselves. But the danger is from other people, not the birds, bees, trees, dogs, and cats. Walking, in nature if possible, not only relieves stress, but it has shown to improve our immune systems. Even if you only go out and walk around your yard, it will help. Plus, you will likely see your neighbors. Community support is essential during these times of turmoil.

7. Adjust to the new normal.

We will get through the immediate crisis. It will likely take longer than most of us would hope. But we’ll never go back to the way things were. The pandemic, the global climate crisis, economic inequalities, the loss of biodiversity, an economic system based on constant growth; are all indicators of a system that is dysfunctional. The good news is that the pandemic, if we

understand it correctly, can help us recognize that the old system is not working and we need a new, partnership system, to take its place. I wrote about that in a recent article, “The Meaning of Covid-19: How to Survive and Thrive in the New Partnership Culture.”

I look forward to your comments. If you'd like to read more articles about how you can stay healthy in body, mind, and spirit, check out my blog [here](#).

If the Corona Virus Could Talk, What Truth Would It Tell?

I'm indebted to science writer Thaddeus Howze and his article [“A Coronavirus Comes To Dinner: A virus shares its concerns about humanity's future”](#) for ideas and excerpts for this section. Howze begins:

Can we talk for a moment? I promise I won't take much of your time. I am not affiliated with any particular party, or social group. In fact, most other viruses barely know I exist. In my native habitats, with bats, pigs, and other animals hidden in dark jungles, I exist in harmony with natural forces. Animals share me, get the occasional chest cold and if they are weak, I end their suffering.

Side note: Steven Osofsky, a professor of wildlife health and health policy at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, said in an interview recently. “When we harvest wild animals from all over the world and bring them into markets, let them all mix together, what we're doing is creating the perfect storm. If you're a virus whose goal is to spread, you couldn't really design a better system to aid and abet a pandemic than these wildlife markets. particularly in urban centers in Asia. You have species that never under natural conditions would run into each other, all packed together, bodily fluids mixing, and then people come into the equation. Pathogens are meeting species that they've never met before. That's when we have these opportunities for viral jumps, including the ones that lead to humans and create the situation we're in now.”

Influenza, on a bad year in the United States, can claim 80,000 lives. None of the technology you have are truly capable of stopping us. It is your ubiquity that works against you. There are nearly 8 billion of you on the planet. An extraordinary number of Humans, packed so tight, you can't help but become breeding facilities for us. Thank you for that, by the way, mutation is one of our favorite things to engage in.

You guys haven't been taking us seriously. Pathogens all over the planet are in agreement. Humans, for all their vaunted intelligence, forget they are part of the Circle of All Living Things.

No one in America should be surprised by the fast spread in China. There are at least a billion people, living in close quarters, with a very polluted environment to weaken the general populace. They are stressed, overworked, living poorly, eating whatever they come across and with their immune systems at an all-time low, frankly they aren't much of a challenge.

You are all so convinced of your capabilities. You are certain you can beat us. "We're going to science the hell out of it," or some such expression.

You aren't even in our league.. We have scoured this planet for millions of years. Our technology is as far beyond your capacity to understand as you're computers are beyond the amoeba. You will make vaccines. We will recombine and try again. You will make new vaccines, and will come back, more lethal than ever Your mentality is your weakness.

Don't you people get it? Every day your feckless and venal leaders take away your healthcare options, spend money on things which may seem important, but in the end make you more vulnerable, is one day closer to your species inevitable end.

None of you are prepared. Not even close. And if you want to prepare for us, here is our recommended list. It still won't stop us entirely, but we will have to work a bit harder to get all of you.

Stop polluting everywhere! *The only way to do that is to slowly scale back your populations and temper your manufacturing.*

You won't do it, but we thought we should suggest it.

Overpopulation is the number one reason humanity can't get its act together. *More bodies for us to recombine in.*

Stop waging war. *It's wasteful, destabilizing, and creates pockets by which novel diseases can take hold in your society and spread.*

Clean up your act. *Your environment is a mess. The oceans are dying, your forests are burning up, the atmosphere is polluted; each of these things weakens you and the species on the planet making them vulnerable to our tender mercies. Take care of the planet or as ecosystems crash, new viruses will emerge to visit your vulnerable populaces worldwide.*

Educate your populace. *Stupid citizens may be easy to rule, but they are also easy to panic. When people can't understand what's happening to them, they make mistakes which cause diseases to be spread. Education means you have a chance to make sensible decisions on your planning and policies, which might slow our assault on your civilization. Do you know what stupid people stop? Nothing.*

Build your infrastructure. *Your national infrastructures are completely shit. Electrical system, sewers, roads, water filtration, and a host of other systems are under-developed making your citizens vulnerable to diseases from a variety of directions; from your farms to your tables, disease is all around you. Not always pathogens either. Pollution causes diseases, too.*

Get rid of pathological leaderships. *This is why we don't worry about killing you. You are setting yourselves up to kill each other. Every time a so-called leader says "this safety net isn't necessary" what they are saying is: YOU DON'T MATTER. If that's okay, then keep putting these lying bullies into office. We will be along shortly.*

Strengthen your network of health systems. *Do I really need to tell you this? I am a disease. I want you to die. The best way to avoid that is to prepare for our arrival by being healthy. Live better. Eat better. Exercise. Enhance your minds. Having good immune responses, eating right, exercising, having healthcare for everyone is the best most effective way to do that.*

I have nothing to gain by informing you, but I thought it was only right to let you know what you are up against. We are not your enemy. We are a natural force present on the planet since life began here.

If you are out of balance, if you don't plan ahead, if you don't take care of each other, then, you only have yourselves and your failed leadership to blame.

Outbreaks are inevitable. If you don't plan for them, you will die in one.

See you soon.

Signed,

Your virus companion.

What's Next: The End or the Beginning of "The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know is Possible." Will You Join Me?

There's never been a time in human history like this one. During the influenza pandemic in 1918, it is estimated that about 500 million people or one-third of the world's population became infected with this virus. The number of deaths was estimated to be at least 50 million worldwide with about 675,000 occurring in the United States. But then, we really had little idea about what caused the pandemic or how to prevent it.

We know more now and its likely the world will do a better job limiting the death toll and developing preventive and treatment methods for the future. But its clear to me that the world will never go back to "business as usual." The truth is, humans have been living in ways that are unsustainable for some time. The global climate crisis, which we've not yet addressed adequately, likely was one contributing factor to the outbreak of this Corona virus.

Where we go from here depends on the actions we take individually and collectively. There are still things we must do immediately to deal with the illness and death the virus has brought into the lives of so many. The economic dislocations will take years to repair.

Yet, the effects of the virus teach important lessons for the future including the following:

1. The world can come together to solve major problems.
2. We're all in this together. No one is safe until everyone is safe.
3. When we are forced to do so, we are able to put human interests ahead of economic interests.

For me, this event will mark a turning point in human history. It will either be seen as the time we came together and turned things around to "create the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible," as Charles Eisenstein so poetically describes our potential future. Or it can be the beginning of the end of the human race and a slide into a horrific future for our children and grandchildren and the end of future generations.

I'm choosing to bet on humanity and I'm planning to do my part to help as many people as I can to not only survive, but to thrive. **I'm starting a new program, Beyond Covid-19, for men and women who are ready to do the following:**

1. To survive this crisis and help others to survive.
2. To learn the lessons the pandemic has to teach us about what we've been doing wrong and what we've been doing right.
3. To use what we learn to make our personal lives more positive than they've ever been.
4. To do our part to help human kind become more enlightened and reconnect more deeply with the family of life on planet earth.
5. To develop an economic system that works for everyone and where we can all live well.

If you'd like more information about this evolving new program, please contact me by emailing me: Jed@MenAlive.com. Put "**Beyond Covid-19**" in the subject line.