

Finding Light in the Darkness

I'm a hugger. A person that gets right up in your personal space to wrap you in my joy at seeing you, my gratitude when thanking you, my love while comforting you. I'm a toucher. I will lay my hand on your arm while we talk, touch your shoulder when I walk by, and kiss your cheek when we part. I always meet someone new with a smile and a heartfelt handshake and rarely pass by a dog with a pet and a hello. I work with the elderly, mostly dementia patients, and savor the warmth of our shared emotion as they lean into my hand placed on their cheek or bring my hand up to give it a kiss when I reach for theirs. I'm a Reiki healer. I have experienced as well as witnessed the mystical relief a spiritually infused touch can render. Touch, so ingrained into who I am.

I love meeting my girlfriends for a cocktail, clinking our glasses to us, and digging into shared appetizers and sauces and stories. I treasure the feeling of community as my church family sings and prays together, celebrating the joy of spiritual awareness. Oh, how I miss these things! I am sure I'm not alone. Humans are pack animals, and by nature, need to connect with others. We are, after all, a communal society.

I find the phrases "back to normal" and "the new normal" so detrimental to our collective psyche. One suggests a return to something lost, and the other implies a lifetime of social distancing, masks, and no community. Both are anxiety-provoking, fear-based, and, in my opinion, overly dramatic. People, as a whole, are resistant to change. There is comfort in what is known, be it good or bad. When the change is as drastic as "the new normal" suggests, our minds instinctively reject it to protect ourselves. I've found thinking of these isolating, annoying, and, yes, sometimes devastating restrictions as "temporary adjustments" necessary to accomplish a "better normal," much easier to digest. A small play on words that offers a sense of positivity, allowing me a healthier attitude. A new perspective that's helped me develop a different mindset towards the difficulties I, like so many, have endured.

For instance, I couldn't share trimesters one and two of my only child's first pregnancy, but find the few times spent together in the third trimester, her belly in full bloom with new life, that much sweeter. I can't give her a baby shower, but I can, when it's safe, have a spectacular party to celebrate the little prince's arrival, with the guest of honor present- how fun!

My church has permanently closed its doors due to COVID, but a few gifted members have started something exciting and new, virtually for the time being, that has kept most of our church family united. Out of the ashes, they are building a future.

I instantly, overnight, found myself out of business. I travel to different facilities providing a seated rhythm and tap dance program for the elderly. As vulnerable as that population is to the virus, I don't foresee them letting outside vendors back in anytime soon. I miss the residents terribly but am making good use of this time. My work is a passion for me, but so is writing. With a little financial juggling, I now know I can have both; a better work-life balance.

Reminding myself the status quo is not a new permanent way of life has made this time bearable. Optimal? No, but tolerable. It has allowed me to find rays of light during this dark time while awaiting a better tomorrow.