



Unexpected Gifts of the Pandemic

By Kelli Richards

A powerful time to reflect on what matters most to you, your family, your work and your world. Slow down and have real meaningful interactions with people.

There's no doubt that life as we know it has been up-ended on virtually all fronts as a result of the pandemic – and we can't minimize the fact that many of our loved ones have lost their lives, many more have lost their jobs or their businesses, our kids have been challenged without access to schools and normalcy, and there has been widespread suffering in every direction.

That said, I have observed that there have also been some unexpected gifts during this timeframe that I felt it may be helpful to explore and examine.

Reduced Carbon Footprint

Notwithstanding our recent heat waves and fires here in Northern California (and statewide!), and the resulting smoke, with so many people working from home over the past few months – not just locally but globally – we've witnessed an enormous reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and clearer skies as a result of dramatically fewer vehicles on the road & in the skies. And that's very much cause for celebration. Hopefully some of that will sustain over the longer-term as more people are allowed to work from home at least part of the time – less commuting on the road and in the air will support efforts to combat pollution, & that's a really good thing.

Relationships Matter

As we are sheltered in place, for those who live in a family environment they have had the opportunity of slowing down, growing closer and becoming more sensitive to creating harmony and supporting each other during these trying times. It's more challenging for those who live on their own, but with technology like Zoom (or even just the phone), we are able to stay connected with friends and loved ones – and somehow it means more to do so when we can't visit in person as often. The same goes for our work colleagues. It seems we're able to appreciate the real meaning of these relationships in our lives, how important they are to us, and how going the extra mile to sustain them in these times really makes a difference to our well-being.

Renewed Focus on the Importance of Financial Wellness

It's a known fact that the vast majority of the US population doesn't have enough money saved for a rainy day. And in a year when we got the mother of all floods, it's become apparent just how important it is to have our finances in order for when unexpected Black Swan events hit us to help us ride out the storm. The basics such as living within our means, keeping debt in check, having emergency reserves set aside, and having a long-term savings plan in place have never been more necessary. My hope as we move through the pandemic is that there has been an increased awareness and focus on ensuring that we all have healthy financial foundations underneath us to protect us in good times and bad. It's definitely something to aim for.



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Mindfulness Towards Optimal Health Care Improves

Relative to Covid-19, there's been a renewed focus on the importance of taking better care of ourselves, specifically towards boosting our strength and immune systems, and optimizing our self-care routines and our overall well-being – both for our bodies and our minds. And while that has been a challenge for some with gyms being closed, we've been forced to pivot. Peloton sales (and its stock) have gone through the roof, and many trainers have taken their fitness classes online as many of us are working out from home. I learned first-hand how difficult it is to secure proper equipment – as we've not been able to secure things like dumbbells either at retail or online; much like the situation with cleaning wipes, the demand has definitely exceeded the supply. That said, I believe that with so many people getting sick with Covid-19, especially those with compromised immune systems and underlying disease, there has been a shift towards enhanced mindfulness of improving our overall health.

We can only do so much from our homes; we also have an intrinsic need to get out and be in nature – and our parks and beaches have been overrun as a result of being cooped up indoors so much of the time. As we know, it's incredibly restorative for the mind and the soul to get out in nature, breathe fresh air, and get a renewed perspective away from our computers and chores – and my fervent hope is that people will embrace how good it feels to do so – and that choice to spend more time in nature will sustain longer after the pandemic has been tackled.

Reduced Clutter

With extra time at home (and for many, extra time on our hands), I've observed that many of us have taken to reducing or eliminating the clutter in our homes. Of course the queen of reducing clutter, Marie Kondo, has sparked a global movement along these lines with her books and TV show, but tackling clutter is something that's been a prime focus in particular over these past six months. We're learning that we don't need as much, and many of us have been "stuffocating" for far too long. Reducing clutter not only clears space in our homes but also has a highly beneficial on our mindset – it's a big mood booster to operate in a more open environment. Hopefully this too is a trend that will sustain and continue over the long term.

Kindness and Generosity

Last, but certainly not least, it seems that we've realized that caring for others around us who may be less fortunate – or even just sharing a kind word with a stranger in line at the grocery store – really means a great deal when we slow down enough and are mindful enough to practice being kinder. Doing shopping or running errands for an elderly neighbor means so much to them. This has been a time when generosity of spirit and in action mean more than ever.

Kelli Richards, founder and Managing Director of The All Access Group is the exclusive provider of business consulting, mentoring, and strategic connections editorial in Los Altos Hills magazine. For more information, visit allaccessgroup.com.

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