CORONA STRONG

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I live just outside of Boston. When in April of 2013, two bombs exploded during the Boston Marathon, I was so proud of how the people of Boston and Massachusetts came together to not only initially respond, but also to resist letting fear change how we lived. Boston Strong they called it, and it meant that, despite the devastating attack, we were not going to allow our way of life to be disrupted.

And now we’re being encouraged to be strong again, this time with the Corona virus attacking us. Some of us wonder just what that means.

**A Different Threat … A Different Response**

Unlike Boston, where we resisted change, being strong now is about accepting unprecedented change and staying positive. It calls for us to accept major alterations of our lives, nearly every aspect of it, to stay healthy, to protect others, and to assist health care workers from becoming overwhelmed. This is Corona Strong and it’s going to be what limits the ravages of this virus. It requires us to change and accommodate for as long as necessary.

Corona Strong is about emotional toughness and stubborn optimism in the face of a prolonged disruption of our everyday lives, our family and social ties, and our perception of the world. Of course, it’s not easy and there are many of us suffering with sickness, financial uncertainty, and loss … loss of people in our lives, of familiar and comforting rituals, and our innocence.

**Uncertainty Can Sap Our Strength**

A major threat to our strength during this Corona siege is the uncertainty of the future. How long will we have to live these “other worldly” lives? When can I hug my loved ones again? It will take some time before we know the answer to these questions, but one thing is for sure. If we lose our determination to resist, the virus will win. Yes, there is some conflicting guidance out there, but if we consider the source of the guidance, we can discern what is the correct thing to do.

**This Is Not New**

Most people alive have never experienced anything quite like this, yet some have. I happen to be one of them. Although I was very young, I lived through the polio pandemic in the early fifties and, in fact, did contract polio. I have a seared memory of the visceral fear of my parents. They felt helpless, unsure of what to do, terrified of what might happen to me.

Pandemics and epidemics are not new for we humans, for they have been around as long as we have. That’s no consolation but it should help with our ability to assimilate the drastic happenings around us. As in previous challenges, we will prevail. We will unleash science on this new enemy and defeat it. How high the cost will be for this success, however, will be determined by our strength of character, determination, and will to come through this … all together.

All major challenges to mankind have had some positive effects. Each challenge helps us build our defenses against further calamities; most enrich our appreciation of our sense of the family of Man or of life itself. John Donne’s famous lines: “No man is an island … ask not for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee” is a gripping acknowledgement of this collective sense of humanity.

In Albert Camus’ riveting novel, The Plague, he marvels at the courage and composure of many of those affected by the plague. When this Corona threat passes, as it will, how will you feel about your response to this global challenge? Will you be a better person for it all? I sincerely hope so.

**Let’s stay strong together!**