**R-E-S-P-E-C-T**

Find Out What It Means to Me (and, All of Us)

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This is a war. Make no mistake about that. We are under attack and have lost more than 80,000 lives and have over one million people infected with Covid-19 in America. Like Britain in WWll, we are all in this together, calling each of us to make sacrifices for the benefit of all. We’re reminded of the immense sacrifice the British made in sending their children to rural areas during the Blitz. Millions evacuated with no knowledge of when they would be able to return. Today, we have many first responders who are living separated from their families to protect them from contracting the Coronavirus. And like a war, we don’t get to decide when we’ve had enough. We cannot surrender because we’re tired of going through such pains to protect and defend ourselves. As long as the enemy is amongst us, many more will die.

Today, as the country begins to reopen, we may feel like diving back in, making life “normal” again. We may be impatient, even angry. And yet, we know that this is precisely the time when we have to build courage, practice patience, and do our part to defend our entire population. This is how we win.

**“You’re Trying My Patience!”**

Businesses are still figuring out their re-opening strategy, often in stages – not unlike what we, as individuals, are experiencing. It’s frustrating, our nerves are frayed, we may feel hypersensitive. It shows up in odd ways – like becoming irritated if someone goes down the wrong aisle in a grocery store that now has arrows in place to keep people at a distance, or if someone doesn’t respect the guidelines for physical distancing and wearing masks. And, for those of us who are feeling a loss of freedom, while we have every right to make choices for ourselves and our loved ones, we need to be respectful to those who are being extra cautious. We can exercise our best judgment for ourselves and still respect the boundaries of people around us. There’s a guided meditation that teaches, “My path may be different from your path; but my path can extend to your path.” We don’t have to agree with each other in order to be respectful to one another and find harmony. We are better when we work together for the common good.

**TIP:** If you find yourself having a knee-jerk anger reaction, try two things: 1) Resolve to take a deep breath before reacting. Oftentimes, that simple filter helps us respond more positively and 2) Remember a time when perhaps you weren’t your best self, and yet people treated you kindly (perhaps as a child, when you didn’t know any better). Can you extend that same patience and understanding with others?

**Your Brain on a Loop**

Patience is a feeling we can generate like any other feeling. Even when we’re wearing a mask that we’d rather not be wearing. Even when we’re standing in long lines with angry, impatient people. The feeling of patience is always available to us. It’s really a choice. It stems from the thoughts we choose to think about any situation. Therein lies our superpower.

While our brains can easily get stuck in a negative spin cycle, looping on anger and impatience, we can always have higher expectations and ask more of our brains. The challenge is to ask our brains to come up with thoughts that generate the feeling of patience. Try those thoughts on for size and see which ones feel true to you, and which ones generate the feeling you would like to feel.

So, while it is completely our choice to feel impatient or angry, to disagree with a store’s policy, to disagree with one’s governor’s policies, the bigger question is whether we WANT to feel that way. If not, it’s completely in our hands to change it, to feel differently.

The reality is that it’s different everywhere, especially as the country partially re-opens and various businesses try to comply with new rules.  Arguing with reality has no upside. It uses up a lot of brainpower, energy and time. It darkens our mood. There may be some who are not doing their part, and that is irritating, but it should only make us more resolved to do the right thing.

**What to Expect in this Brave New World**

Expect it to continue to be surreal for a while. Restaurants may have tables spaced farther apart, and your server might be wearing a mask and gloves. Venues may only allow half of the population in, and only at scheduled times. You may be asked to wear a face mask or have your temperature taken when entering a place where crowds are more common. Friends may avoid those bear hugs for a while and still prefer to keep physical distance. The important factor to remember is that everyone is putting these plans in place to keep us safe – it is an act of love, even if it feels like tough love right now. If you are venturing out, particularly with your family, you may want to review a venue’s website to see what precautions they are taking, or call in advance so that you are prepared.

The long and short of it? We need each other, and it is compassion, resilience, respect and patience that’s going to get us through. *We’ve got this!*