

During the unusual times surrounding the COVID-19 crisis, we have all learned things about ourselves, our loved ones and how we all depend on one another. Because of the epidemic, we have found what's important in life and what we are willing to sacrifice.

Here are five life lessons we're all learning during this coronavirus outbreak.

1. Sometimes trading your individual freedom is best for the greater good

No one is used to all the regulations and restrictions we are under. To suddenly be told to stay home every day and to no longer have easy access to activities and social interactions has an affect on anyone's mental and emotional state. The isolation can be suffocating and contribute to depression and anxiety. But while it's difficult to stay home and practice social distancing and self-isolation, it has been an essential part of slowing down the spread of COVID-19. There have been some that argue it's a breach of an individual's rights. However, it's showing that the individual sacrifice makes a difference for all of us. We have learned that there must be a balance between individual rights and the safety of the public overall. Finding that balance is difficult, but when we see the benefits, it becomes easier.

2. Working from home is doable for many job positions and should be an option for more people

Even though working from home isn't what many people are used to and it's required an adjustment, we've learned through this time that many positions are completely doable from home. Maybe not every part of a position can be done remotely, but some things can and the opportunity to continue working remotely could better the lives of many people. Some are enjoying the days with their pets or the chance to see their kids a little more. Others can't wait to get back to the office and miss the time out of the home. For some with chronic illnesses or health issues, this has been a possibly life-changing experience. No matter where you fall on that spectrum, it may be worth talking with your employer about your remote work opportunities.

3. Taking a sick day should have less of a stigma and should be more encouraged

Everyone at some point finds themselves sitting at work feeling like they were hit by a bus and wishing they could be home on the couch with medicine, soup and the chance to rest. But asking to take a sick day is often met with doubt or frustration, with some employers requiring that an employee find a replacement to come in for their shift and others penalizing their employees for taking that time to heal. A culture of sacrificing your health for the good of your company seems to be prevalent in many organizations. But the COVID-19 crisis has taught us how important it is to stay home when you're sick and that employers should encourage a change in this culture. Even a simple common cold can spread through an office like a fire if employees aren't encouraged to stay home when sick. Making sick days a positive thing will be essential in reducing the spread of coronavirus until a vaccine is available.

4. Healthcare workers, researchers, teachers, even gas station workers all deserve more respect and better compensation

Many states and cities put restrictions on which businesses could stay open during the spread of COVID-19, referring to them as "essential." Obviously healthcare workers and researchers, as they treated COVID-19 patients and worked quickly to try to find treatments and work toward a vaccine. Teachers kept working from home and parents quickly realized how much work it requires to teach their children. But many people who we hardly gave a second thought to last year also kept coming to work. Think gas station workers, sanitation workers, construction workers, grocery store workers, truck drivers, pharmacists and pharmacy techs, among many others. We are suddenly aware just how much every single person in our society and what they do every day affects the rest of us. This time may be

a good opportunity to consider how we compensate celebrities, pro-athletes, politicians, high-level executives and others. Could our resources go to helping those who we now consider essential?

5. Compassion and helping one another is one of the most important things to practice and teach our children

When the COVID-19 crisis first came to light, we saw some people buying out entire stores of toilet paper to sell at a huge mark up.. Suddenly there was a toilet paper crisis. We saw the same thing happen with masks. Then again with diapers, baby wipes, cleaning supplies, food in some places. On the other hand, we saw others donating any extra supplies they had, donating their time, letting each other know which stores were restocked. While a crisis can bring to light the worst in people, it can also show the best of them. It is only with compassion and self-sacrifice that some communities are surviving. While it's sad to see people trying to capitalize on an epidemic, it is encouraging to see people and businesses so willing to give what they can, especially to overworked healthcare workers, families trying to feed their children, and our senior citizens. If nothing else, we can hope that this crisis has taught us that we need to continue coming together and working together to make our communities and lives better.

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