

Coronavirus: Mind the Gaps

Mind the Gaps: they're new and they're big. Mine might not be the same as yours.

Staying at home or self-isolation runs the risk of psychological and emotional isolation. A case beautifully made (with helpful remedies) in this excellent video by my good friend David Pullan.

<https://bit.ly/3eyAihl>

3 weeks recovering from "minor flu symptoms" delayed my sharing David's thought-provoking video. But let me now add some thoughts of my own. Many of what follow are good concepts, but there are alternative views – creating gaps which are new, could be big, and psychologically very important.

Gap 1: Personal resilience is being tested to the full

Good concept: self-isolation for 14 days to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. "Sleep in separate rooms, use separate bathrooms if you can" was the Government's advice. My wife and I could, so we did.

Alternative view: I was lucky to have mild flu symptoms, but recovery over 3 weeks included 16-18 hours' sleep most days, loss of appetite for 5 days, and very low energy throughout (I've heard others with similar experience). My natural optimistic disposition wasn't much in evidence. Oh how I longed for an occasional hand to hold, a reassuring hug, a fellow human being just to be in the same room.

Gap 2: Getting started with new Apps isn't easy for many of us

Good concept: Many new Apps are being developed to bring people together electronically. HouseParty, Twitch and Tiktok to name but a few. Similarly, Skype, Zoom, Teams and others bringing people's faces, not just voices, into the room. And they're free to use. Great when we're in extended Stay at Home times.

Alternative view: I'm not very good with technology. I find it all a bit daunting and I'm really worried about missing out. Would it work on my phone anyway? How do I find out, who do I ask? I find it hard to set things up, I don't want to bother anyone.

Gap 3: Video links at home - friend or foe?

Good concept: with restricted social mobility, we can't visit family and friends for the foreseeable future. Skype, Zoom and other Apps allow us to "meet" electronically so we can see each other, a huge improvement on using just a telephone to speak to each other.

Alternative view: several confident, outgoing people in their 70s and 80s have told me that absence of seeing loved ones is the hardest aspect to overcome. But they fear a video camera in the house. What if my appearance that day isn't what I'd want it to be? What if I'm still in my bed? What if my house isn't as clean and tidy as I'd like visitors to see? No thank you! Such perceptions undermine self-esteem and confidence, despite the positive intent.

There are counter arguments in each case, of course. Like David's video, my key point is to recognise we're all in a learn by doing phase, and to stay open minded and considerate of whoever were interacting with. Their reality might be very different to ours.

Final thought.

Asking for help is a sign of strength. Never in recent times have each of us been more willing to help each other.

I wish you all good health, physical and mental.

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