

August 21, 2020

Dear Community,

While it may feel like everything is changing and there's not much constancy...the world keeps spinning, seasons progress, and the sun continues to rise. Carly Simon's song, "**Anticipation**," keeps popping up as it captures the **feelings of the time**:

*We can never know about the days to come  
But we think about them anyway  
And I wonder if I'm really with you now  
Or just chasin' after some finer day*

*Anticipation, anticipation  
Is making me late  
Is keeping me waiting*

How many of us yearn for "the days to come" and feel like we are kept waiting and waiting?

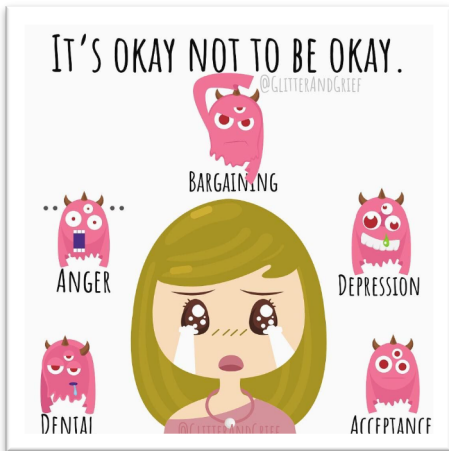
## Chasin' after some finer day

When most of us first heard about a novel coronavirus in early 2020, it seemed so **far away** and, perhaps, **abstract**. It was affecting people in East Asia...and then Italy...and *other* places. As it slowly touched our local communities, many of us were **not personally impacted** beyond changes in rules and ways of living that were *imposed upon us*. Even now, we look at what the disease and authorities are *doing to us* as we **desire a return to normalcy**.



But here we are in mid-August, and we are still living with COVID-19, masks and physical distancing, and uncertainty...and we don't know when things will get better. Maybe it's time to re-evaluate our timeline and what "normal" means both so we can pace ourselves and also **so we can pace ourselves and do so with acceptance**.

## Learn from those who know change



If you've lost a loved one, you likely know what it's like to have to adapt and adjust to what a "new normal" looks like. This is also true and ongoing for those who live with chronic illness or pain. The definition of chronic is "persisting for a long time"—it is the opposite of short and acute. **The truth is that we are living with COVID-19, and we will continue to even after a vaccine is developed.**

We will not go back to what we thought of as normal life, and this is okay. Think of those you know who live with ongoing challenges and are positive and thriving. They embody the adaptability of our human spirit. **We are all living with a chronic condition now, and this requires adapting and new ways of being so that we can thrive in the present.**

Living with an eye toward returning to what life was like in 2019 is draining. [Our website](#) provides **resources for how to live in the present moment** and tips for adaptability. Perhaps we can pause and reflect on what we have lost and can release...so we that can **be present and embrace that which comes.**

Natalie Dattilo, Brigham & Women's Hospital clinician health psychologist, shared about [forced positivity](#) and the value of recognizing that "good vibes only" might actually compound things: "We judge ourselves for feeling pain, sadness, fear, which then produces feelings of things like shame and guilt," she said. "We end up just feeling bad about feeling bad. It actually stalls out any healing or progress or problem solving."

It's both okay and good to process what we are feeling. We can learn from the [7 Psychological Stages of Chronic Pain](#) (based on Elizabeth Kubler Ross' [Five Stages of Grief](#)), which certainly represent what living with COVID-19 means for many. We might also take a moment to contemplate if and how we've experienced these stages over the last few months and weeks:

- Denial
- Pleading, Bargaining, and Desperation
- Anger
- Anxiety and Depression
- Loss of Self and Confusion
- Re-evaluation of Life, Roles, and Goals
- Acceptance

How might we move through these vital stages so that we get to the place of acceptance that allows us to thrive while living with the chronic condition of COVID-19?

## Anticipation and Recalibration 🎵

Although Ms. Simon's lyrics in her classic song are about a person, she hauntingly captures **yearning for the future**, and it concludes with **a shift to appreciating what we have in the present**. It's an awareness that we can choose how we react to any situation...and it takes practice. For example, when we recognize that living with COVID-19 is long term and we are able to process our emotions and move through the different stages to acceptance, the locus of control shifts inward and we are no longer subjected to the whirling changes around us.

This is what many who live with grief, pain, and chronic disease have done and continually do. This is what it can be like living with COVID-19 in our daily lives.

Ms. Simon sings:

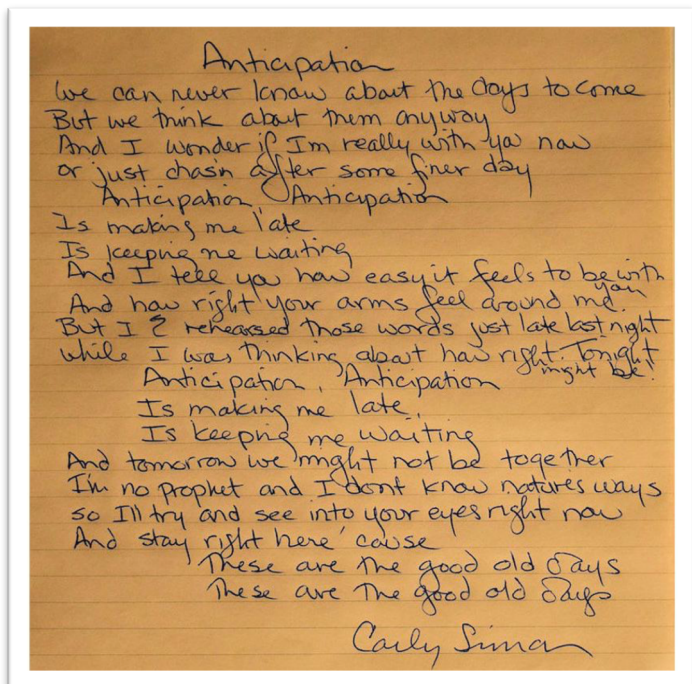
*Anticipation, anticipation  
Is making me late  
Is keeping me waiting..*

What might our individual and shared lives look like if we instead sang:

*Recalibration, recalibration  
Is making me pause  
Is keeping me breathing...*

*And stay right here 'cause these are the good old days  
(These are the good old days)  
(These are the good old days)  
(These are the good old days)  
(These are the good old days)*

**These *can* be the good old days right now.**



## Resources for you

Here are some free (and doable!) resources for recalibration and intentionality:

- [Last letter](#), we shared: “Expand your creativity, learn ways to thrive, and *focus* on growth through [lifestyle and other classes on SkillShare](#)”
- This week we encourage: Learn from our friend, [Alice Inoue](#), about “*How to Overcome Overwhelm Effectively*” and receive **two months of free membership at Skillshare**, which has ~30K classes in a broad spectrum of topics. Use this [special link](#).
- [Emotional recalibration for leaders](#): take a break and do something you enjoy.
- [Recalibrate your breath](#) and set an even pace for your day...and year.
- Art is a great way to recalibrate! Check out these [art projects from Art Explorium](#) that you and your kids can do at home.
- **Identify something in your everyday life to use as a signal to come back to the present moment so that your next moment is filled with intentionality.** It can be a red light, the sound of a text message, or the action of putting on your (sun)glasses or mask. You can touch the door jamb each time you enter a room, pause every time you start and stop your car, or take a deep inhale when you turn on a light. Any of the above—or something of your choosing—leads to intentional living, act by act, and moment by moment. **This is also recalibration.**

Finally, we close with two poems—the second can be used as a walking meditation—by [Anne Pepper](#):

### ***Unless I Accept***

*I will suffer every day  
In some way or other  
Unless I accept  
What is happening  
All of it  
Every last crumb  
Yes, even  
That.*

### **Calibrating to the Earth**

*I am calibrating to the earth  
Each step an echo to the shift within  
A pedometer of the heart  
As I lift my feet.*

*When I walk on her soil  
I realign with all that is  
Being and my being attuned  
Through the soles of my feet.*

*On this trail that I tread  
She restores me once more  
To who I have always been  
By the slow pace of my feet*

To acceptance ~

*The OSF Team*

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