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Thriving during COVID-19 Pandemic

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Across the globe, COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in widespread disruptions in various spheres of human functioning and thus epitomizes the dynamics of living in a 21st century volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world



Media has played a pivotal role in spreading awareness about improving immune system functioning and preventing COVID-19 by engaging in frequent handwashing, using alcohol-based hand sanitizers, and practicing social distancing. However, practicing social distancing can trigger a gamut of negative emotions, ranging from anxiety to depression, and this in turn can compromise one's overall well-being. If we are to believe in the idea of mind-body connection, then negative impact on psychological well-being will eventually adversely affect one's physical health.

At this juncture, we need to ask ourselves an important question: How can one thrive and thus enhance well-being when life has come to a grinding halt? Drawing upon my experience in the field of psychology, in general, and positive psychology, in particular, I would like to emphasize the overarching power of 'psychological capital' (Luthans et al., 2007) in helping us sail through the storm. According to Luthans and colleagues (2007), psychological capital consists of attributes, such as hope, resiliency, optimism, and self-efficacy. With our very survival under threat on account of possibility of a global recession, food insecurity, or even death due to disease or hunger, finding purpose in one's life and working towards one's life goals becomes extremely difficult. On a more positive note, the current phase is a critical period for reexamining and altering our personal and professional goals. The hobbies that we neatly locked up inside our cupboard to run the rat race, stand a greater chance of helping us earn sufficient income in the post COVID-19 world. Close relationships that we conveniently ignored will become even more important to live a good life. Instead of getting sucked into the vicious cycle of gloom, despair, and agony, we need to set meaningful goals and find ways in which these goals can be attained (hope), believe in our capacity to achieve these goals (self-efficacy), forestall favorable consequences (optimism), and continue to work despite experiencing setbacks (resilience). For instance, if you always dreamt of becoming a successful painter but somehow could not work towards your dream, set aside some time from professional obligations to improve your painting skills; enroll in professional painting courses and keep practicing till you get the skill right. Who knows, you might be the Pablo Picasso or Frida Kahlo of the post-COVID-19 society? In short, better late than never!

In fact, in the pandemic's aftermath, I foresee careers in fine and performing arts, consumer foods, mental health, agriculture, research and development, and artificial intelligence booming more than the conventionally sought-after careers in engineering and corporate management. In other words, this is a time to not only invest in one's hobbies but also learn some new skills that will inevitably prepare you for careers in these domains. In addition, reading literary and scholarly works and writing will become the cornerstones of building a healthy post-pandemic society as these foundational skills are critical for developing empathy and reflection. So, what are you waiting for? Take out a novel from your bookshelf and start reading it! Note down your thoughts and feelings in a diary or express them over a blog!

Human beings have experienced and will continue to experience unforeseen circumstances. What really makes the difference is how you analyze these situations and make the most of them.

References:

Luthans, F., Avolio, B. J., Avey, J. B., & Norman, S. M. (2007). Positive psychological capital: Measurement and relationship with performance and satisfaction. *Personnel Psychology*, 60, 541-572.