

Members of Rissho Kosei-kai of New York

Tomokazu Hatakeyama

Hello, everyone!  
Hope this finds you staying safe and doing well.

Over a month has passed since we changed our daily lives to staying at home, with the exception of going out only for essential and urgent trips or services.

In this uncertain time with the future up in the air, I imagine many of you must be experiencing various feelings, such as anxiety and impatience.

I am very grateful and humbled by the numerous people, such as the healthcare professionals, people in governmental and public administration, people who provide supplies and services necessary for sustaining our lives. At this moment, without rest, they are continuously providing for and supporting us so that we can live safely in our homes amidst the present circumstances. Furthermore, we need to be grateful that we have a home where we can continuously stay.

Through Zoom technology, we are fortunately experiencing a wonderful way to connect among ourselves for study sessions and Hoza. Moreover, this technology allows for us to see the faces of members from remote areas, whom we rarely have the opportunity to meet, as we speak with one another.

It seems this situation will probably continue for a while. Instead of passing this time mindlessly, a valuable way to spend this time would be to take this opportunity to work at things we usually could not do.

As I reflect back on this past month, I noticed that, lately, the days seem to go by much faster. I wake up in the morning, do the sutra recitation, eat breakfast while watching the news, check the e-mails, read a book and/or take a walk, then, in the blink of an eye, the day has passed by.

Unless we set a clear plan, with objectives on getting this and that done, days drift by with nothing accomplished.  
And when we look back, we end up feeling a pang of regret of not doing anything.

Recently, there was a message suggesting what we can learn from the novel Coronavirus on the internet. I would like to share some of them with you.

\* It reminds us that we are all equal.

This disease treats us all equally, regardless of any difference in our life situations.

\* We are all connected. It reminds us that something that affects one person has an effect on another.

This virus will cross national borders, no passport necessary.

It reminds us that national borders and demarcation lines that we have put up have no meaning.

- \* It reminds us how precious our health is.
- \* It reminds us of the shortness of life and of what is most important.
- \* It reminds us of how important our family and home life is.
- \* It reminds us to constantly keep our egos in check.
- \* It reminds us that we can be patient, or we can panic.
- \* Whereas many see the novel Coronavirus as a great disaster, I prefer to see it as a good opportunity to be a "great corrector."

Coronavirus has reminded us of the important lessons that we seem to have forgotten. And it is up to us to either learn from them or not.

I would also like to share the following story I saw on an episode titled "The Happy Hormone" of NHK's program "Gatten [I got it!]"

When people come into contact with each other by hugging or shaking hands, a hormone called "oxytocin" is released in the brain, causing a peaceful state of mind.

When we hug or massage the hands and feet of people suffering with dementia or arthritis, calmness is restored.

However, because of the "social distance," we cannot do that now.

Yet, we are told that conveying gentle and kind words to their ears on the telephone has the same effect.

Just by a grandchild asking his/her elderly grandfather or grandmother "How are you?" on the telephone, the happy hormone, "oxytocin," is released, cheering them up.

For us as well, although communicating by e-mail with others is important, but at times, wouldn't it be of utmost importance to have them hear our voice directly to convey our concern about their safety.

Let us live our daily lives cherishing the Buddha's arrangements at this time, feeling enriched and being positive.

Gassho