

# Helpless and Hopeless

Category: COVID-19

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | April 1, 2020

Even as a little girl, I needed a routine to keep me focused and sane. Now, I like knowing that from 9 a.m. to noon, I will be working at the university with my writing students; that after I get home, I will either read or take a nap; that I might take a before-dinner walk or muster my energy to clean the bathroom or kitchen; that I will watch the news—news that does not inundate me with warnings and dire statistics—and then challenge myself on Jeopardy; and that I will end the day with a book, feeling satisfied and comfortable.

COVID-19 has stripped away my routine. It has turned me into a hermit—one afraid to take the stairs or elevator from my third-floor apartment to the lobby to retrieve my mail. It has depleted me of energy. I may awaken with plans to do laundry or prepare a meal, but I usually end up on the couch under my blanket decorated with the titles of Broadway musicals—the closest I will get to my beloved world of theatre for a long while. It has made me, a person who normally sees the glass as half empty, into a more profound pessimist who feels both helpless and hopeless.

Because of COVID-19, I have become older than I should be at age 72. My mortality seems very real to me, not something that will happen in some future time. I am convinced that worry has caused more wrinkles to mar my face and more gray hairs to replace my natural brunette ones. I worry about my adult children—one in Vancouver, British Columbia, and the other in Manhattan. I worry about my extended family and the friends I view as family. And I worry about all the people who are on the frontlines fighting this disease. I pray a lot—for those who have died from COVID-19, for those who are ill, for those who are even more isolated and frightened than I am

Because of COVID-19, I no longer recognize myself. I look in the mirror and see a stranger—someone under the curse of a seemingly uncaring and unstoppable virus. I look outside and see empty streets. The blue sky and sunshine sometimes delude me into believing all is well, but then I remember—and I am again a victim of fear.

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