

KANE COUNTY CHRONICLE

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Calming anger during these trying times

“When angry, count to 10 before you speak. If very angry, a hundred.” – Thomas Jefferson



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How many times throughout the day did your face twist, your hands fist or your words hiss? Maybe all three happened just upon waking up! Or maybe you were simply moving along whistling a happy tune when someone said something offensive to you and stopped you in your tracks – literally took the wind out of your whistle.

It's hard not to get absorbed and crumbled into the many messes of life. And our world sure has some mighty messes to contend with these days. Roller coasters are not only in amusement parks, stock markets or pandemic graphs. They also play out in the emotional ups and downs of the day. One

moment, all's going well; the next, it's all gone astray.

But it isn't really all or nothing. There's some notion, some feeling, some essence of who you are that isn't connected to that roller coaster of events and emotions. The challenge is finding that balanced part of you in the most troubling of times – the big curveballs of life.

Counting 10 seconds before an angry outburst gives you a chance to see that you can alter your perception of things. You're so much more than your emotions. In fact, you have the ability

to change them at will – replace one for another – turn rage into kindness. You're not this. You're not that ... but, who are you then?

Here's a simple exercise to help you find out. Put a timer on for three minutes. Take a pad of paper and start listing all the things you are. Jot down every single thing that comes to mind. Your jobs in life, your emotions, your ambitions – everything that makes up the person you think you are. Jot one-word descriptions. For example: baker, mother, aunt, helper, honest, etc. Work through the whole pad if necessary. Keep writing for the full three minutes. Keep searching. Give yourself the time to come up with as many descriptions as possible. Heck, write for five minutes.

After the minutes go by, read your

list out loud.

What if you did this same exercise again in five years? Or one year? Or even the next day? This is a fun exercise the whole family can enjoy together. Keep a scrap book of your responses. Watch how they change over time. Years later, you'll each be reminded of who you were then and who you are now.

So before a negative emotional roller coaster gets the best of you, think about pausing before jumping on that foreboding ride – take 10 counts first. Actually, there's no rush. Take 20 or, as Thomas Jefferson said, “if very angry take 100.”

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A meditative moment

Be the change you want to see in this world. – Mahatma Gandhi

It's certainly noble to work for peace in this world, but if peace doesn't reside within oneself, world peace will remain elusive. Peace has to begin with you, with me, with each one of us individually.

Sit in a comfortable position. Watch your thoughts. Where do they wander? Do they wander into negative self-talk? Are you regularly berating yourself or others?

Next time you have a negative thought about yourself or someone else, try turning the page. Release your negative thought. No one has control of that thought but you. Change



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your thoughts, and then change the world.

By strengthening your mind and your personal meditation practice, you are less susceptible to the whims and sways of the negative influences of the day.

Breathe in peace.

Meditate in peace.

Walk in peace.

Go forward and create peace in this world.

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Experience calm in the storm: take a moment to be here now

Entering into life fully makes sense on a beautiful Hawaiian shore, but even Hawaii is now in the midst of this horrible coronavirus. In almost every corner of the world, we're told to stay 6 feet apart, to cover our faces and not to visit others. For some of us, this means even our parents and most cherished loved ones. To say this corona chaos hasn't been easy is an understatement for many of greatest and tragic proportions.

There's the inevitable calm after the storm to look forward to, but in the meantime, how can we experience calm in the storm? Even though the storm we're in may be changing course slightly, it doesn't appear to be ending anytime soon. Isolation can take its toll. In isolation we're forced to listen to the sounds of silence. If ever there was an opportuni-



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ty to listen – really listen attentively to what these sounds are saying – it sure is now.

So here's a little meditative moment to try:

Turn off the computers, televisions, phones and all electronics, and quietly listen to the person who is constantly talking to you. In fact, this person has been endlessly talking to you for years.

Have you heard?

Listen to the chatter in your head that's going on day in and day out. You think you finally go to sleep at

night ... Ha! You're talking to yourself in your dreams, too! The inner self talks to you every moment of the day and night, and it's exhausted. It needs a timeout – a time to reframe, refocus, refresh. A timeout on a daily basis would be a mighty fine thing indeed.

Most of us are so busy following our mind chatter that we aren't listening carefully to what it's saying and how it's directing us. The mind goes on autopilot for so long it's easy to forget who the driver really is. First that inner voice says this, then left turns to that, then switches to another lane, another destination, another judgment, another frustration, on and on and on.

So take a moment to be here now. It's not just the office or home that needs a spring cleaning. It's also the

busy overcluttered mind. Take just a few minutes today and watch. Watch where your mind goes and see if you can simply give it a rest. Come to where you are right now. Silence. Breath. Spring clean out the mind clutter with the exhale.

Inhale your focus to the steady movement of your breath. Notice the cool air coming in, the warm air going out. Can you feel this? Watch closely because it's quite subtle – cool breath in, warm breath out. Just a few moments today, a few moments tomorrow.

After the storm and through it, be here now.

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An exercise to balance your energy

Are you feeling anxious? Off-balance?

Here's a simple meditation exercise to help calm and balance your energy. It's a fun breath meditation to do alone or with the entire family – rain or shine – called Bee's Breath.

Start by lifting your right hand into a thumbs up!

Then close off your right nostril with your thumb and breath in and out through your left nostril.

Before your next exhale, close off the left nostril with your ring finger and open your right nostril to exhale.

Next: Inhale right nostril, close it.

Open left nostril.

Exhale.

Inhale left nostril, close it.

Open right nostril.

Exhale.

Continue alternating the breath between the nostrils.

It's really quite simple. Basically, you're inhaling and exhaling one nostril at a time. No doubt this may seem rather odd to do, but these are odd times, so why not? Actually, this unusual technique to calm the body has been around since Ve-



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dic times, meaning thousands of years.

After you get the hang of this alternating pattern:

Lengthen each breath.

Deeper inhales.

Slower exhales.

And once you're comfortable one nostril at a time:

Make the sound of the bee as you exhale.

Mouth remains gently closed, lips relaxed and not pursed. Gather the sound from deep within. Continue making this sound through your exhale one nostril at a time. Everyone at their own pace – inhaling and exhaling.

Meditatively bee-utiful!

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Removing the chatter of violence in your mind

*"Who you are speaks so clearly
I can't hear what you are saying."
- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Sages throughout the ages have illustrated the practice of nonviolence as an essential means to solving problems in our society. Yet many leaders of nonviolence died violent deaths in their calls for peace. Could the forces of nonviolence actually inspire the forces of violence? The concept of nonviolence is certainly not a new concept, but it is one that is often sorely misunderstood and unrealized within our current societal structures, as well as within our own personal relationships. We need only to look at the current violent outbreaks around our country to see the societal reality, but the personal reality is often much more elusive.

Many of us are simply not aware of the connection our particular actions have to the violent acts of others, or



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simply refuse to see the connections. If we could see the many generations of suffering in one person's acts, our compassion for each life would increase. But realizing these personal ties to violence is difficult because these ties run deep and are justified through long-held mind processes.

So let's say you meditate daily and infuse your mind with kindness and love (certainly not an easy feat in itself). You work steadily to fortify your body and mind with uplifting practices. How does this strong body and mind relate to a violent world completely out of whack? In other words, if one finds peace inside, how does one balance into the violent storms raging outside? Is the only answer to retreat

to a cave in the Himalayas?

The outward signs of violence are obvious, but the inner layers of violence within one's self are often difficult to see and consequently much more difficult to transcend. An awareness of one's participation in these personal expressions of violence are the first steps in effective change. A meditation practice helps one to see the mind more clearly. Only through recognizing and removing the mind chatter of violence can external change happen. The mind fuels the body's language and physical actions. It's not an easy process to follow this mind chatter because it takes continual self-study into each personal action and reaction, and that's a big mandate.

So here's a simple meditative moment to help.

Watch closely your mind today. Your actions in what you say and do may appear pretty obvious. So let's look instead at the thoughts we think

that no one else sees (ha!).

Every time your thought turns to anger or hatred, mark it down. Keep a tally of marks. Watch how many times your thoughts turn to condemnation of yourself and others. See how many marks you accumulate by the end of the day. This isn't easy - our thoughts move swiftly. And this is not to say your anger isn't justified. This is simply an exercise in awareness, in self-awareness to help remove veils in experiencing the reality of a peaceful existence. Increasing self-awareness so you and I can sincerely, strongly and effectively walk the talk of peace.

*Just watch.
Simply watch your thoughts.
One thought at a time.*

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To mask or not to mask? That is the question these days

"To be, or not to be," – William Shakespeare, 1603

"To mask, or not to mask," – you and I, today

Those sure are the questions. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and masks of this outrageous virus.

Conflicting views are everywhere. Different experts espousing different theories supporting different assessments, and each one sounding convincing and believable. Which magic curtain is the true all-knowing wizard behind? Auntie Em! I just want to go home! No, no, no ... not home ... I've been there too long. Anywhere but home!

It's no longer a matter of wearing one's heart on one's sleeve, it's now a matter of wearing one's political affiliation on one's face. It's never easy to march to a different drummer. There's so much social/peer pressure



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everywhere one turns. Whether a child or adult, peer pressure is out there beckoning each of us to follow a sheep herd mentality. It's not easy being the Lone Ranger. For example, if the people in your circle aren't wearing masks, how silly it would be for you to wear one. After all, you're wearing it to protect them. They're not wearing one to protect you. So you wearing a mask is in essence telling those who are unmasked to be extra careful around you because there's obviously something wrong with you. You, healthy, smart, capable you! Beware!

And if it's "Hi-Ho Silver Away" with your mask, yet everyone around you is wearing a mask, you're in essence telling others you're strong and

healthy as can be – like an ox! Silly people, don't worry, be happy! What's with the masks? Life's a grand adventure! Well, you may not have any worries, but you can be pretty much guaranteed those wearing masks around you are worrying. And they're worrying about you. You, healthy, smart, capable you!

Life is good! It's great! It's a blessing beyond belief! Our health care workers know this. They demonstrate on a daily basis their support of life and often guide us into experiencing healthier ones. And each one of them wants a life, too! They know full well life is good, it's great, and it's a bloody miracle.

This coronavirus crisis is demonstrating ever so clearly how important leadership is, whether at home, in the hospitals and care centers, in schools, or in governments. And if you're a parent who's been leading your children through these past trying months of mandatory home-schooling,

you may be feeling additional parental anxiety as you ponder what's next for your kids. Oh, yes, ummer! Summer camps! Baseball! Concerts! Barbecues! Uh, maybe?

Did you expect an answer? I don't have one. But I sure do have a meditative moment. That's something you can certainly count on.

As you read this, take a moment to imagine the trials and tribulations of these past few months. Take a few breaths and really think about what you've learned.

Close your eyes and reflect on these experiences, knowing each of these experiences has been shaping you into the miracle of life you are today.

You, healthy, smart, capable you! Open your eyes. Go forward into a life well-lived.

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OPINIONS

THE FIRST AMENDMENT

▪ Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Learning lessons from pain and suffering

Learning's a gift, even when pain is your teacher. – Michael Jordan

Mine eyes have seen the glory. Certainly not in the ways Michael Jordan's eyes have, but perhaps in some similar ways, too.

My eyes have seen a lot. Glory, as well as heartache, frustration and despair. There comes a time in life when each one of us will have to face difficulties.

Some more painful than others. Some publicly, some privately. Some expected, some not. Some will come



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out of left field to surprise us and take the wind out of our sails.

It's not just the difficulties, but also the great joys that can take us by surprise. A friend coming to help when least expected and most needed, for example. Or the loyalty of a cherished pet coming to protect you when in danger.

Or the spiritually knowing hand of a parent respectfully guiding you through a difficult maze in life.

Any or all of these experiences are ones that can stop us in our tracks and make us reflect. Perhaps even redirect our life into greater ways of being in this world. Here is a simple meditative moment to help you refocus and redirect.

It's really easy to do and takes only a moment. It helps you to pause and step out of the busyness before you. It helps you to refocus and become fully present.

Here it is:

Rub your hands swiftly together to generate some heat in your palms.

Close your eyes and place your warm hands over them.

Take two or three long deep breaths.

Feel the healing energy of your hands over your eyes.

Lower your hands.

Open your eyes.

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Catch the negative thought and reframe the thought

"Be the change you want to see in this world." – Mahatma Gandhi

Have you ever gotten to a place and don't remember how you got there? You obviously knew where you were going because you got there, but the process of getting there was a mystery. For example, along the way to your destination did you notice that house with the new 'For Sale' sign, or the tree along the curb that needs watering, or the cat hiding under the bush, or the pothole you barely missed?

Our thoughts can take us on rides of their own making. In fact, it's actually easy to get into a sour mood and not know how you got there. Do your busy thoughts take you to a field of dreams or a field of nightmares?

With extra time on our hands, there are most likely extra thoughts ruminating in our heads as well. Worries about the future along with worries about here and now. Since we



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don't seem to have much control over this strange virus running asymptotically amok among us, let's bring attention to one thing you and I have complete control over – our own thoughts.

When you see a negative swirl of thoughts starting to gather in your mind, here's a new game of one player (you) called Catch and Reframe.

Here's how it goes:

Suppose you're looking out the window and your mind starts to drift to an argument you had with someone. You start getting angry thinking about how unfair the situation is and how you're misunderstood. Perhaps you're feeling hopeless as to how to fix this difficult but important relationship.

Write to us

The Kane County Chronicle welcomes original letters on public issues. Letters must include the author's full name, home address and telephone number. We limit letters to 400 words. All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity. Letters can be emailed to letters@kcchronicle.com or mailed to Letters, Kane County Chronicle, 333 N. Randall Road, Suite 1,

First, Catch your thought.
Catch: What do I care what they think of me anyway?
Next, Reframe your thought.
Reframe: I'm a caring person and

this person is important to me.

Another thought:
Catch: I can't stand them!
Reframe: I'm so angry because I do care (great read: "Healing Anger" by Dalai Lama).

Another thought:
Catch: We're opposites. They'll never understand me.

Reframe: Imagine myself walking in their shoes. How would I want to be approached if I were walking their walk?

So, the two steps are:
1. Catch the negative thought.
2. Reframe the thought.

These times of social distancing can help us in learning more about who we are and, more importantly, who we want to become.

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26 OPINIONS
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OPINIONS

THE FIRST AMENDMENT ■ Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Our thoughts are like the clouds

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure." - Marianne Williamson



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Are there clouds in the sky today? If so, it's a perfect day to meditate on them. Watch the clouds as they drift. Some take longer to move than others. Some are slow, and some move quickly. Some seem to be a clear white, but if we study closely, we may see multiple layers of colors.

Too many clouds block out the sun. When they get too heavy, they rain on us. Sometimes lightning develops, which can cause big problems. And sometimes the rain is so hard it causes

problems even without the lightning. But most often after the rain is released, there's a calmness all around. The earth is nourished. The grass is a bright green. When the clouds clear and the sun comes through, the flowers peek out and become stronger and more vibrant. They've been nourished from the rain and now open their petals to gather in the glowing radiance of the sun.

Think of your thoughts as clouds moving through the sky. Just as too

many clouds can block the sun, too many thoughts in your mind can cloud your vision. Sure, you might be a great multitasker, but think of what you could achieve if you were able to put full force behind one single task of your choosing.

And just as the rain comes when the clouds get too heavy, our thoughts can hold us back until we choose to release them. Sometimes they're released through a storm of anguish and sometimes through a gentle sigh of tears. You too can experience calmness and nourishment when you finally release your rain of negative thoughts.

Here is your cloudy day meditative moment:

Take a deep breath and imagine your thoughts drifting like clouds across the sky. Your thoughts peacefully and gently moving through you. No need to stay on any one thought. One thought simply blends into another as it moves along on its way across the magnificent blue sky. Imagine that magnificent sky as the essence of who you really are.

The clouds of thoughts billow and change.

Your magnificence is constant.

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OPINIONS

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Listen to the sound of silence

*"Hello darkness my old friend,
I've come to talk with you again ..."*
—Simon & Garfunkel

Have you ever had a dream with a persistent sound in it only to wake up and find your alarm clock on the nightstand making that same sound? Or someone gently nudging you to wake up and their voice becomes a part of your dream until you eventually do wake up? Your dream seemed to seamlessly pick up on the sound and creatively incorporate it into the sleeping storyline. Now that's artisty! We close our eyes at night to sleep,



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yet the sounds we hear continue on, inspiring the tapestry of our dreams.

What do you hear when fully awake? There are so many sounds to compete for your attention. Which ones do you choose to focus on in the soundscape of your wakeful life? Maybe the sound of the ticking clock or the hum of the moving fan or the distant roar of an airplane? Around

you now are so many choices. Listen closely.

It usually starts with the obvious. Sometimes it's hard to get past the obvious. Loud noises dominate. It's easy to get trapped into thinking that's all there is. That's the sound. But there are actually many more sounds happening. A cricket singing outside near the window. The leaves rustling in the trees. The drip of the faucet. The rumble in your stomach. The beating of your heart.

So many sounds – which do you choose to hear? What do you want the tapestry of your life while awake

to sound like?

So in this meditative moment, simply listen. Listen calmly and listen closely to the many sounds around you. Sounds filled with subtleties. Try focusing in on one. Perhaps one that lifts your spirit. It's your choice. Listen closely to what is there.

*"And whisper'd in the sounds of
silence."*

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Reducing one's stress with facial relaxation

For fast-acting relief, try slowing down." - Lily Tomlin

Have you ever had someone congratulate you by patting your shoulder and the act of having your shoulder touched was a wake-up call to you as to how much tension you were holding there?

In these times of social distancing, this type of congratulatory encounter happens less, yet the tensions continue to mount. Our body holds stress in our muscles. Sometimes so much so that we don't even realize this until we're touched.

So here's a simple exercise to help



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you relax one part of your body at a time. I'll simply focus on the face in this column today, but the principles can be applied to all areas of your body. You will focus on specific areas of the face to help the whole face gradually relax. Pause between each section of the face mentioned to let your stress there melt away. Slow down. Breathe deeply into this pleasing pause.

Let's start with the jaw. Unclench the teeth and relax the jaw.

Pause. Breathe deep.

Relax your mouth.

Next the nose. Relax the nose.

Relax the cheeks.

Relax the eyes and the eyelids.

Relax the eyebrows.

Relax the forehead.

Relax the scalp.

Relax the ears.

Pause. Breathe deep.

Notice how your face feels. Think of doing this simple exercise whenever a part of your body hurts or is tense. Simply instruct the area of your body that's troubling you by

calling out the various parts that make up the whole and tell each individual part to relax. Instruct gently. Don't scold your body to relax or the opposite may happen. Simply separate and acknowledge each part by gently guiding each part individually into a relaxed way of being. This type of progressive muscle relaxation has been scientifically proven to reduce stress when practiced with focus and clarity.

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