When life feels hard, when we are pinched or pulled or asked to step up in new and perhaps uncomfortable ways, we might find ourselves at a crossroads. We ask, “What do I do now?” And then, ideally, we sit quietly and listen for some inner knowing, some quiet voice of assurance that tells us, “This is what you must do next.” Ta Da!

Unfortunately, more times than not, our “stuff” gets in the way of the answer. And we get busy distracting ourselves or feeling so anxious we are unable to move or think clearly. We find ways to fill the space with unproductive coping mechanisms. Anything to not think too much. To not feel. But then we find ourselves only half living. And I keep thinking, even though we feel this is a time to get “through”, it is as much a part of our lives – this time – as a year ago was. Or a year from now will be. This is our lives continuing to unfold. Here and now. This very minute.
More than Getting Through, cont.

So my question is this: How can we see this paranetheses in time as more than getting “through”? How can we live meaningfully and with intention amidst the uncertainty? Perhaps there is a better way? A kinder way? I’m wondering if now is the invitation we are being given to meet ourselves (and others) with grace and gratitude, with gentleness and humility. With tenderness and compassion. With love.

What does this look like for you?

It starts with each of us. And it doesn’t have to be BIG. We are not required to save the world (unless we have it within us to do – and then by all means, do it!), but we are required to save ourselves – to the very best of our abilities. To bring our best selves forward – amidst the uncertainty, the fears, the unknowns. Being intentional about how we are spending our time is where we can start. What we are paying attention to. What we allow in. What we keep out. Small, thoughtful gestures. Nourishing our bodies, hearts, and minds. Giving thanks for the small, the mundane, the mystical and the magical. It’s all still here. If we really listen. And when we are paying attention.

As Anais Nin says, “we don’t see things as they are; we see them as we are.” How are you? This paranetheses in time we are living – this moment of uncertainty – is calling on us to bring our very best selves forward. Whatever that means for each of us, may we have the courage we need: To be intentional. To be kind. To really live, even though (even when) life feels scary.

Small Kindnesses

I’ve been thinking about the way, when you walk down a crowded aisle, people pull in their legs to let you by. Or how strangers still say “bless you” when someone sneezes; a leftover from the Bubonic plague. “Don’t die,” we are saying. And sometimes, when you spill lemons from your grocery bag, someone else will help you pick them up. Mostly, we don’t want to harm each other. We want to be handed our cup of coffee hot, and to say thank you to the person handing it. To smile at them and for them to smile back. For the waitress to call us honey when she sets down the bowl of clam chowder, and for the driver in the red pick-up truck to let us pass.

We have so little of each other, now. So far from tribe and fire. Only these brief moments of exchange. What if they are the true dwelling of the holy, these fleeting temples we make together when we say, “Here, have my seat.” “Go ahead—you first.” “I like your hat.”

by Danusha Lameris

Music City Still Rocking!

"This is Music City. The music is in us. And we always find a way to share it with the world" (musicality.com). Free virtual concerts to dance and sing to - by yourself or with your people!

The Silver Lining

A Lesson in Letter Writing
by Kathleen Rall, Associate Director - Peabody Career Services

Last week I volunteered to serve as a virtual part-time ‘adjunct instructor’ for my nieces and nephew in San Diego. Like many students around the world, they are adjusting to homeschool in their family. I used my lunch break and new Zoom account to teach a lesson about the importance of letters throughout history. We discussed a few famous letters and how historical events were often communicated through a simple written letter. I talked about how this was such an extraordinary time in history and it could be helpful for them to write about what they are thinking and feeling so that they can remember this unique time in their lives. For homework, I asked them to write a letter to their future selves in the year 2025, describing all of their emotions about this new normal. Their responses—which covered everything from ‘I miss the monkey bars at school’ to ‘there are so many people out walking in the neighborhood’—made me consider what I’d write to myself. One silver lining in these strange times? We all have some extra time to slow down and write a letter.

10 Reasons You Should Write More Letters

by Kyle Young @ Lifehack

1. It’s a memorable way to touch the people you love.
2. Research says it can actually make you happier.
3. It confirms the importance of a relationship.
4. It’s a classy thing to do.
5. It helps you pause long enough to say things that matter.
6. It creates a wonderful surprise.
7. It’s a tried and true tradition.
8. It speaks to older friends and relatives in a medium they cherish.
9. It’s a chance to show off (or improve) your handwriting.
10. It’s easier than you think.

Excerpted from: www.lifehack.org/286924/10-reasons-you-should-write-more-handwritten-letters

“We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are.
– Anais Nin

One silver lining in these strange times? We all have some extra time to slow down and write a letter.
INGREDIENTS

1 cup old-fashioned oats
2/3 cup toasted shredded coconut (sweetened or unsweetened)
1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
1/2 cup ground flaxseed
1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips (or vegan chocolate chips)
1/3 cup honey
1 tablespoon chia seeds (optional)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS

Stir all ingredients together in a large mixing bowl until thoroughly combined. Chill. Cover the mixing bowl and chill in the refrigerator for 1-2 hours, or until the mixture is chilled. (This will help the mixture stick together more easily.) Roll into balls. Roll into mixture into 1-inch balls. Serve and enjoy immediately! Or refrigerate in a sealed container for up to 1 week, or freeze for up to 3 months.
Upcoming Virtual Events

Office Hours: Office of Student Engagement & Well-Being
April 3, 9:30-11:00 a.m. https://vanderbilt.zoom.us/j/535137967
April 7, 2:30-4:00 p.m. https://vanderbilt.zoom.us/j/992363159
April 9, 2:30-4:00 p.m. https://vanderbilt.zoom.us/j/260300248

Peabody Paws - April 9, 12-1 p.m. In partnership with the Peabody Library and to celebrate Professional and Graduate Student Appreciation Week, we would love for you to hop on zoom with any of your cuddly creatures – children, plants, and stuffed animals welcome! Pop in or stay awhile and visit with other faculty, staff, students, and companions. We hope to see you and your creatures there!

Stress-Busting Week Festivities

Iris Book Club - April 22, 12-1 p.m. Co-hosted by the Office of Student Engagement and the Peabody Library, this semester’s book is Life’s Great Question: Discover How You Contribute to the World by Tom Rath. Includes an online assessment about your unique contributions and how you can apply them personally and professionally. The first 15 people to sign-up for the book club will get a free Kindle copy. Write to karen.swoopes@vanderbilt.edu to RSVP and reserve your copy.

“We’ve Got Game(s)” Happy Hour - April 23, 4-5:30 p.m. Put your “game” face on and come join the Office of Student Engagement and Well-Being and the Peabody Library staff for a celebratory end-of-the-semester afternoon of games, giggles, and good times. Hope you can make it!

Feedback or questions: Contact us at PeabodyOSE@vanderbilt.edu

If you are a student in need of additional support or resources, please contact Assistant Dean Monique Robinson @ monique.robinson@vanderbilt.edu

Be sure to follow us @PeabodyOSEW