

Giving back: How to help others while isolating

Americans are inventing new ways to assist one another, said Nicholas Kulish in *The New York Times*. Take Shea Serrano, a Texas author, who was recently watching news on TV about work losses tied to the coronavirus outbreak. “He felt he needed to do something—so he tweeted.” But Serrano has 345,000 Twitter followers, and his short, blunt tweet was a call for any among them who needed help paying a bill to share it on his feed. Stories about student loan debts, car payments, chronic illnesses, and babies on the way flooded in—and then strangers started sending money to other strangers via Venmo, PayPal, and Cash App. By March 24, Serrano counted nearly \$28,000 that had been raised and donated, not to a charity but directly to people whose budgets were broken by the outbreak and related shutdowns. As one contributor put it, “All we got is each other.”

What might the rest of us do to help? asked Mary Louise Kelly in *NPR.org*.

First, “think local.” Many informal charitable campaigns are springing up, facilitating ways to get aid to laid-off restaurant workers or children who aren’t receiving the school lunches they usually depend on. Look up your local food bank online



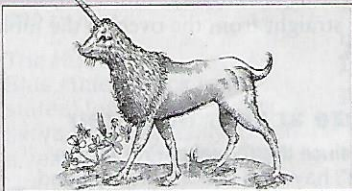
Serrano, above, and food bank volunteers

to see what they need most, and maybe start a Facebook fundraiser among friends, said Katie Conner in *CNET.com*. Or simply donate money to Feeding America, a nationwide network of food programs that feed more than 46 million people. You can help keep shuttered local restaurants afloat by spending money on their takeout food, their merchandise, and their gift cards.

And don’t forget that you can give time instead of money, said Ria Misra in *TheWirecutter.com*. Reach out to isolated, at-risk neighbors, such as the elderly, and “ask them how you can help, whether by picking up prescriptions and groceries or offering other assistance.” Blood supplies are down nationwide, so contact the American Red Cross if you’re healthy enough to donate. And be as social as you can be under the circumstances, said Meghan Walbert in *Lifehacker.com*. Call or Facetime with older relatives who live alone. Play virtual chess with a distant

friend. And if you’ve never participated in neighborhood message boards or Listservs, join those groups now—“so that you’ll be able to share your surpluses, pool your expertise, and call on your neighbors for help when you need it, too.”

And if you’re bored...



Forget those forbidding “don’t touch the art” signs you’ve seen in museums, said Hakim Bishara in *Hyperallergic.com*. More than 100 cultural institutions around the world make elaborate images available in free coloring books that can be downloaded and printed. The New York Academy of Medicine initiated the project in 2016, using the Twitter hashtag **#ColorOurCollections**. You can now try your hand at a van Gogh using images from the Getty Museum in Los Angeles or flesh out a virtual bestiary of mythical creatures (see above) provided by the University of Minnesota’s Wangenstein Historical Library. “How about coloring some strange historical patents like an eye protector for chickens?” For that, try the *Coloring Book of Patents*, published by the National Archives.

Lockdown season: Making the most of it

How to stay fit at home

“Fitness centers across the country have shut down, but that doesn’t mean all exercise is canceled,” said Carly Mallenbaum in *USA Today*. There are hundreds of workout apps and virtual classes accessible from home, and many are currently waiving fees. Peloton, for example, is offering its app free for 90 days, and you don’t need a stationary bike to take advantage of its thousands of fitness classes. In a rush? One “booty- and leg-focused” training app, Tone It Up, is now free until April 13. For those seeking more low-key activity, Yoga With Adriene “has a video for everything, from long morning routines to movements for neck pain.” On her free YouTube channel, Adriene recently uploaded a video called “Yoga for Uncertain Times.”

Dating while distancing

“Call me old-fashioned, but this virus just might be a boon for our love lives,” said Anna Pulley in *ChicagoTribune.com*. Having to initiate any potential romance remotely, rather than face-to-face, “forces people to actually get to know each other, to connect emotionally and not physically.” With dating-app companies advising users to stay home, the unattached are learning to conduct get-to-know-you dates via

phone, text, and video chat—“which in some ways seem more preferable than your typical first date: no commute! cheaper drinks!” Social distancing can encourage candor, too, so “ask those bigger life questions that are usually too taboo to ask on a first date.” You might try cooking a dinner together via Skype. And if that’s too challenging, try Netflix’s “watch together” feature for a remote movie date—“a good litmus test for compatibility.”

Addressing Covid-19 anxiety

You’re not alone if the coronavirus crisis is causing you anxiety, said Brianna Provenzano in *Vox.com*. To manage it, begin by giving it its name and reminding yourself what anxiety is: a very common emotional response to anticipated danger. Doing just this “puts you back in control.” You can then list the specific threats causing your worry and think about them rationally. Moving from paralysis to minor action helps, such as making a grocery run while observing due precautions. To diminish the power of uncertainty, “try to keep yourself grounded in the present.” One reliable trick is to count your breaths. “Being mindful about your breathing helps switch off the neural circuitry that anxiety ramps up, leading to an overall feeling of calm.”