



RENEWNEWS

RENEW helps people who juggle work, family and community commitments sustain (or regain) their enthusiasm, effectiveness and purpose.



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Maybe the Locusts *Are* Coming
Linda Hawes Clever, MD

The other day, Musimbi Kanyoro, immediate past president of the Global Fund for Women, called to talk about how we all were doing with COVID. She also told me that few farmers in Kenya were planting crops. “The locusts aren’t far away and may be coming our way!” She mused, “At times like this, the bottom sinks deeper.” You may feel as if *you* are sinking deeper. As Iris DeMent sang, “Easy’s gettin’ harder every day.”

Being caught in the Cuisinart of history isn’t the end of everything, however. JRR Tolkien wrote, “The world is indeed full of peril, and in it there are many dark places; but still there is much that is fair, and though in all lands love is now mingled with grief, it grows perhaps the greater.”

I’ve heard buoyant stories and techniques lately, some during RENEW Zoom or conference calls. For example, you could consider what hasn’t been cancelled: birthdays, humor, good weather, clean sheets and towels, conversations, gardens, kindness, thanks, art, memories, faith, hospitals and their staffs, librarians, and schoolteachers. Also, one-liners help. “Due to my isolation, I finished three books in one day. And believe me, that’s a lot of coloring.”

Yup, laughter helps. Frankly, I keep some very funny videos in my “COVID-funny” email file and tune in, sometimes daily. I also check out my “COVID- inspiration” or “interesting” file: The Monterey Bay Aquarium live cam of jelly fish (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28cnxCbix0k>) helps me float and bob, bringing my shoulders down from being wrapped around my ears.

Don’t get me wrong. My heart breaks, being away from family and friends, maybe forever. Yes, while it is fun to co-ordinate watching *Hamilton* - 2,800 miles apart – on TV, hugs are way better.

What is required of us is to re-invent ourselves, to re-find joy, to go beyond just surviving another day, and to imagine a better world.

Consider this: are you managing the media or are the media managing you? You could limit exposure to major outlets to, say, 15-30 minutes per day and substitute positive sites, such as Daily Good (<http://www.dailygood.org/>), The Greater Good Service Center (<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/>), and CCARE (<http://ccare.stanford.edu/>). Also, favorite music can sooth the jangle.

You could *do* instead of *moan*. Help get out the vote or collect books for kids who aren’t in school or shop for an older person. I know a 92-year-old who calls 15 people a day and connects.

As we up periscope and scan the horizon, it looks like much more turbulence lies ahead. Willie Nelson once wrote a song, “Live every day like it’s your last and one day you’ll be right.” If it were your last day, you’d want to be in great shape to enjoy it. That means take care of yourself! It has never been more important. Eat, sleep, play, get outdoors and breathe that freshly made oxygen. Examine yourself and, as friend and colleague Janet Meiselman, PsyD, says, “Ask if your thoughts are supporting peace and serenity. Rest your attention on a thought that brings a smile to your heart.”

By paying attention to ourselves and the world around us, we can meet and surpass the challenges. That is what we are made for – making sure that we and others do not sink deeper. If the locusts come, we will be ready.

RENEWing in Uncertain Times

Last year wound down with two new Sequoia Portola Valley Conversation Groups[®] starting and continuing into 2020. Before the second to last meeting, COVID-19 struck and the stay-in-place order was imposed. The remaining meetings were re-organized and held via conference calls, since not everyone in the groups had computers. New groups began in May with eighteen of the participants from the previous session continuing to meet monthly remotely from their homes.

On the 3rd week of April, Renew held a webinar for the Alameda Contra Costa Medical Society physicians, titled *Contending with COVID-19*, to bring ACCMA members together and to offer tested, practical and creative and approaches to the crush physicians were experiencing. The webinar had over 50 attendees. Interactions via chat during the program were robust and reviews were posi-



Following that, RENEW has been in touch with other Northern California Medical Societies that are interested in offering a similar program to their members. Although some COVID chaos has eased, other tensions have arisen in the meantime, creating a prime time for people to review values, contend with change and uncertainty, set priorities, maintain relationships and make plans.

The emergence of webinars as a means of learning led to Renew presenting a program for Leading Age, California on RENEW's Conversation Groups[®], as well as for San Francisco Town and Country Club on *Thriving Not Just Surviving, Even Now*. We've found that webinars can work well for people to ask questions, comment, and exchange information and ideas. One of the most striking results is that people no longer feel so alone or frazzled.

During this time, Dr. Clever has continued working with the National Academy of Medicine's Clinician Well-Being Collaborative, attending meetings, editing, and distributing materials. She has also co-authored an article with Dr. Sharon Mowat for the Permanente Journal, *Been There; Tried That; Learned This: Two Physicians' Life Care List for Colleagues*, to be published in August.

Inside RENEW

On March 2, 2020 RENEW's Board of Directors met to continue discussions regarding new program opportunities. There was discussion regarding groups that Renewing has not typically reached out to, and which of those are most suited and in need of Renewing. There board agreed that Renew should continue contacting organizations suitable for convener development, as well as well young families and those working with elders.

board.....
meeting