



RENEWNEWS

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



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Going Beyond Differences **Linda Hawes Clever, MD, MACP**

Bonobos are nice. They are much nicer and svelter compared to their aggressive cousins, chimpanzees. Bonobos share food. They are peaceable. Females foster infants from outside their neighborhood. Unlike chimps, bonobos don't maraud or kill each other. They avoid battles with interlopers.

So what?

We humans share 98.7% of our DNA with bonobos and chimpanzees. (We also share about 80% with cows and about 60% with bananas. Let's not go there. Many of the identical DNA sequences are not involved in important coding.)

The point is, if we are quite a bit like bonobos, we must be even more like each other.

Maya Angelou pointed out in *Human Family*:

... We love and lose in China
we weep on England's moors,
and laugh and moan in Guinea,
and thrive on Spanish shores.

We seek success in Finland,
are born and die in Maine.
In minor ways we differ,
in major we're the same.

I note the obvious differences
between each sort and type,
but we are more alike, my friends
than we are unlike...

A confluence of forces has brought us to an historic low in trust of our government and, even more sadly, in our trust of each other. This compounds the anxiety, loneliness, and depression of the pandemic.

Perhaps we should carry Angelou's last stanza as our banner as we work to mend our personal, social, and political wounds. That is, we should accentuate our similarities, not our differences.

It does seem that we would make better, smoother, faster progress if we had each other's back and if we got together – like bonobos. We could go beyond that, of course, *if we listened to understand, not to reply*. If we built bridges. If we identified our values, those core guides that form the basis of our judgements of good and bad, right and wrong. Shared values are part of society's glue. To move ahead, we can talk about and live our values, many of which are alike. For example, every group Renew has worked with over the last quarter-century(!) has mentioned "honesty" and/or "integrity" as a value. "Kindness" or "compassion" are next in line.

As we identify our overlaps, our "alikes" (not necessarily our "identicals"), then our differences may become clearer (or lesser) and easier to address. The edges of our divides may soften. We will be able to understand, connect, and repair – so we can go forward, together and better, paying attention to what we have in common. We can *do* this.

RENEW Renews!

None too soon, and with the enthusiastic help of Elisha Danmeier (see great news below) and Shy Adelman of New York, RENEW is plunging into Instagram. When the time comes (you will be the first to know!), please be a friend. We hope to connect, learn, offer, have some fun, and expand horizons.

Actually RENEW has already branched out into the social media ether. Oakmont, an active adult community near Santa Rosa, California, recorded our May 16, 2021 talk, *Refresh, Renew, Refocus (Even Now)* and put it on *YouTube!* <https://youtu.be/EV-Xa-slvJY>. Give it a try. One listener wrote a tome that included, “Doctor Linda, I just want to say that your presentation was amazing!... I practice your breathing exercise – breathe in for a count of 4, hold for 7, breathe out for 8. And to also think about letting go. Because that’s what I’m doing, isn’t it? I’m letting go and letting in.”



COVID and RENEW

Every RENEW program since February 2020, of course, has had COVID as context: These include multiple medical society, Century Club, Stanford Women’s Club webinars and recommendations based on an in-depth analysis of a “satisfaction-at-work survey” for a major medical clinic. Renew’s July Stanford course is “Being Better Than Busy.” Linda continues active in the National Academy of Medicines Collaboration on Clinician Well-being and Resilience.

“What rhymes with “Languish”? “Vanguish”

Our COVID experiences are evolving rather like a Polaroid picture. Although we are now more adept at dealing with uncertainty, this peculiar re-entry phase exposes the low-grade misery that many have felt. Getting together is awkward one friend said: “I was told to bring something to the BBQ and my mind went totally blank. What could ‘something’ *possibly* be?” Another friend said, “When I get dressed to go out, I can’t find my lipstick. I forgot my head band because I put it on after my mask – but I’m not putting on my mask much any more!” To leave the dark Land of Languish, try summoning your *Vanguish* powers. This process takes determination and a campaign attitude. You have to excavate around torpor to get to your feelings and acknowledge them. Exposing gloomy situations to sunlight helps them brighten and dissipate. You can pause, breathe deeply to shift your brain blood flow to the executive areas and away from the misery area. Then you can focus on solutions (including getting care, if you need to) and shift into a gratitude mode.

Inside RENEW

RENEW welcomed a new Program Manager in December 2020. Elisha was drawn to RENEW by her passion for health and wellness. She has enjoyed living a life filled healthy habits for numerous years. She loves spending time with her husband, teenage daughter and all their rescue animals.

