

Life during the Covid-19 pandemic

Betty Staley

Over the last few years, I've been traveling a lot either for work or pleasure. The pandemic has grounded me, and for many reasons it has been a positive experience. First of all, I'm fortunate to be in my little house with a garden in the back and the American River Trail across the street. I have been able to connect with my house in a new way, to clean out shelves and closets, to scrub the grout on the floor tiles, to notice areas of clutter, and, of course, to cook every day, grateful for fresh produce, as well as oranges and eggs from my neighbor.

Weeding and pruning have created an attachment to the garden. Being home I was able to experience the bursting of the lilacs, the fruit trees, and, most notably, the pink blossoms of the dogwood tree planted over the ashes of my sister Janet. Today, I pruned the azalea bushes.

I take a daily walk, sometimes two in a day. I often meet a friend part-way, and we walk by social distancing and share our lives. Coyotes have crossed our path, turkeys have gathered to impress each other with their tail feathers, hawks have flown overhead, and woodpeckers have been busy making holes in the bark of their favorite trees. The views of the river as I cross three bridges is a welcome sight.

I have a mask from my time in India, and I've made a cotton one to be used when I'm near others. I haven't gone to a store in the last three weeks and have been grateful for deliveries from our local market.

My daily rhythm includes a one-hour face-time with my 9th grade grandson, who has disabilities resulting from his stroke. Being home has given both of us an opportunity to work on his assignments. Usually, I would work with him only once a month, but now it is a five-day-a-week occurrence. I have been able to build each day on the previous day's accomplishments, and I've used observation exercises to perceive how he thinks, what helps him connect his thoughts, what questions to ask to draw out of him, thoughts he didn't know he had. He had chosen as a project for his geography class the topic of caring for people with disabilities as an example of social justice. He watched videos of people dealing with disabilities. I watched them as well. He had a complex series of questions to answer, and as I helped him do that, I could see that he was becoming more confident in recognizing his own disability and becoming familiar with concepts such as advocacy, accessibility, and social justice. Of course, I'm working with just one student each day. I think of the teachers who are handling an entire class.

Teachers at independent and public Waldorf schools have jumped into the challenge of connecting with the children in their classes. Rather than overly relying on screen time for the younger children, they have created projects, crafts, nature experiences, and personal connection. They have used screens where needed, and especially in the older grades. However, color, shape, observation, movement, and handwork have been helpful tools.

I look at this experience of sheltering at home as an opportunity for time, gratitude, and perspective, and I wonder about the future.