

Self Connection in the Turbulent Times of Covid-19

With Bridget Belgrave

Every day the amount of change has been so huge!

Each day lately has felt like a week or even a month. Why? Because the amount of change every day has been so huge. Change to our home lives. Change to our work lives. Change to the structures of our society, locally and globally.

Which of us ever imagined that cafés, schools, sports events and even borders would be closed around the world? That the police in Spain would use drones to speak to people in parks to tell them to go home and stay home? That people worldwide would be thrown into precarious financial situations, as large and small businesses suddenly slow down or shut down?

As I write this I feel a pulse of tension in my lower rib cage that tells me fear is coming alive in me. My rib cage tightens and my breathing becomes shallower.

What do you feel?

What do you feel as you focus on all this, when people exchange alarming text messages with you, when you read or hear the latest news? Does your heartbeat go up? Do you feel wobbly? Sad? Scared? Anxious? Angry? Overwhelmed?

Feelings herald needs. They spring from them. Our needs are always with us. When reasonably well met they are quietly contributing to our sense of well-being. Only when stirred do they start sending the smoke signals of our feelings. What are your smoke signals telling you in this time?

Which of your needs are stirring?

I am beginning to know the needs that are stirred in me. They include:

Freedom: I want to do what I choose when I choose! I have my plans, and I don't want to cancel them!

Peace and quiet at home: My husband and I have had work canceled, and hear government advice about social distancing. We're suddenly both at home almost all the time. New kinds of conflicts and irritations arise!

Trust in the well-being of dear ones: My son developed strong coronavirus symptoms a few days after a work trip. A colleague he had been meeting in Portugal tested positive. I feel scared. Will he be OK?

Support: His wife could not get through to the NHS 111 helpline and currently, in the UK, only those in hospital and especially vulnerable others can get coronavirus tests.

Choice: Sometimes I want a break from the latest news – but my husband tells it to me, or my habit of clicking on news websites gets the better of me.

Clarity: I have been feeling unwell for a week. A light virus. Unusual symptoms. No fever. Do I have Coronavirus? Should I self-isolate? I'd like to know!

Contribution: I'd like to be of service in this time. How can I best do that?

Creativity: So many new things need to be set up! New conflict resolution sessions at home, new neighbour support teams, new ways to interact with colleagues, new structures in society.

Viability: I feel a deep pain as I wonder how people will cope with social isolation and with less income. I long for everyone's basic needs to be met, for our lives to be viable.

I re-focus from my rising panic towards these life qualities, these living needs. I slow down and give myself time and space to call on each:

- Freedom
- Peace and quiet
- Trust
- Support
- Clarity
- Contribution
- Creativity
- Viability
- Gratitude

Ahhh. The mystery occurs. The mystery that although nothing has changed in my outer world, I feel more spacious and calm inside, just by bringing my attention to these qualities of life. I notice that I do in fact have a degree of each. And I feel warmth and gratitude welling up. I am so grateful for all I have. And for these good 'companions' – my living needs

Gratitude

I am also grateful for having learned the value of not pushing my feelings away, but following them to their roots. Yes, I'll be in a much better place to connect with people, think clearly and flow into action from this calmer and more self-connected place. However fast the river runs, I want to be well-rooted.

I hope you too can call on your needs as supportive 'companions' as we collectively wing our way through these fast-changing and unpredictable times.

Note: This piece was written on 16 March 2020 in the very early days of Covid-19 spreading in the UK.