

Hope and resilience in the midst of the pandemic. Does suffering offer the potential to learn and find meaning? It often feels as though we are just surviving until it is “over”. But is just surviving enough? When we are on the other side of this pandemic could we inhabit a world that is stronger, more cohesive and able to respond to the world’s existential problems (climate change, poverty, racism etc.) Can we use this global experience to become wiser, more capable, more responsive. I believe it is possible and this belief gives me hope.

What does hope require? A willingness to look to the future with the faith and evidence that we will find a way forward; something to look forward to, a goal to strive for; other people and community who are willing to hope with us; willingness to face this uncertain situation with the knowledge and ability to use the resources we have to live and thrive in spite of it. There are signs of hope and resilience in our midst and we are all part of them. It requires determination to motivate ourselves to see them and act on them.

Here are some examples. The vaccine story is unprecedented. Large companies which are usually motivated by profit alone have come together with science to work toward a socially and morally imperative goal...one that is aimed at the survival of humanity and saving lives. The vaccine is here and we know that we can eventually defeat this virus. Our public health systems and health care systems show incredible courage and perseverance in caring for us and our communities and they are visible enough now that we see the amazing work that they do. (I have watched our local health care workers respond and the coordination, planning and skill is truly inspiring....we are so fortunate to have this team working with us) Our global cooperation toward saving and protecting each other and humanity has helped turn our attention toward other social and environmental problems (global warming, poverty, racism, housing problems, unsustainable forms of capitalism) that urgently need our attention. I think our response to this pandemic is evidence that we could turn these other human troubles around. From a more personal perspective I see businesses struggling, surviving, adapting, recreating themselves. We are learning to replace our material “conveniences” with activities and ways of living that don’t require money and purchasing. In spite of the “distancing” we are creating ways to communicate, empathise and maintain community. I see kindness daily as people care for each other, protect each other, worry about each other and love each other. People are volunteering in droves to care for and educate and work together. People are out walking, appreciating community and nature and learning a natural kind of mindfulness about daily living and relating. We are more aware of the needs of the elderly and are looking for solutions to do better for them. I think we are learning more about the hard work of loving ourselves and others. One way to get stuck in helplessness and hopelessness is to withdraw and give in to feelings of powerlessness. We know this doesn’t work. If we can see ourselves and others as needing love and care and encouragement, that there are things that we can do for each other, the way that we see our world changes. On reflection we are an amazingly resilient species and there is every reason to hope and look to the future with enthusiasm and energy.