

How Covid 19 has turned my lonely life into a not so lonely life.

Shortly after the outbreak of Covid and the introduction of lockdown and “stay at home” measures here in Switzerland, I was out on a (allowed) social distancing stroll with a colleague who commented laughingly “Now everyone is experiencing what my normal life is like.” My thoughts were, “Me too, and then some”. My life for the past 5 years that I’ve been here in Switzerland has been intense regarding the isolation aspect –which has not been a choice (necessarily). I have made very few friends –almost none, and a normal night for me would be spent at home alone, feeling lonely. A normal weekend would be spent out hiking alone, less lonely, as I accost strangers unabashedly on the trail with my versions of ‘Grüezi’- Swiss German for ‘hello’.

Since the whole Covid 19 thing- I have not felt lonely once, despite being home even more often- alone! It has had a huge positive effect on me knowing that everyone else is not out drinking Aperol Spritzes at the steet cafés while ‘poor me’ is at home alone (drinking Apérol Spritzes on my balcony). The socialites are home too. I now feel like I am ‘part of the in-crowd’. Not only that, but I have become friends with 2 acquaintences that in all likelihood I would not have become friends with otherwise. They have time and are around (ie. they are not working); and we had *an excuse* to connect; we didn’t need to be embarassed or awkward or anything –it was ‘allowed’. And I am seeing another 2 (actual) friends much more often because they are also around – doing télétravail- as we call it here (i.e. working from home). And family! I’m hearing waaay too much from them! ☺

As I am distance teaching (Friday: “Dear staff, please start teaching online classes starting Monday”), that is also keeping me more than busy, so that loneliness is further kept at bay.

I have also been in contact with people via social media all over the world- one friend I had not talked to for 7 years! And I’m now getting detailed info and images from life on Haida Gwaii (how cool is that!). I am now doing Zumba lessons with a friend in Sri Lanka.

And then there is the clapping at 9:00 PM –not often enough, in my opinion, but it’s nice when it happens- followed by a solo act of a maestro alto-sax (just guessing) player who sits on his window ledge with his feet dangling over the edge (no balcony ☺) and plays us a number, to a round of applause and cheers – wonderful! How can we keep this up once ‘its’ over?

Unfortunately, the colleague that I went on the walk with at the start of it all, has not been in touch (or reciprocated my ‘invites’ to chat via Whatsapp or do another social distancing walk). It seems that some people are not making as much of an effort to nurture friendships, as they also have ‘an excuse’ (Well, do they? We’ll see how that one goes).

At this point, I can’t say that I’m looking forward to going back to the way things were. Maybe I won’t have to – I am sort of trusting that I have now bonded with 1 or 2 other lonely souls and that we will still be there for each other, once this is ‘over’.

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27.04.2020