

0. *Pre-read for context.*

1. *Close read the text for understanding.*

2. *Perform one of the five analytical reading tasks.*

3. *Write a one-page reflection, connecting this article to your own experiences, reading, or observations.*

## **During the Coronavirus Epidemic, We Will Be Separated. We Still Have to Stick Together.**

*As schools and businesses begin to close, we'll have to say our goodbyes. But in a time of intense crisis, we have to be united.*

by Wendy R. Sherman, *USA Today*, March 13, 2020

Coronavirus is all about how interconnected we all are in the world, how a virus crosses borders without regard to nationality, ethnicity, class, race, gender. And yet, to mitigate the rising number of those infected we are told to isolate ourselves, to create social distance. So how do we create community, kindness, generosity and love in a time of coronavirus?

This isn't the first time that we learned we are interconnected and have to deal with a world crisis in very personal ways. When airplanes flew into the twin towers on 9/11, Americans confronted the fact that our oceans did not protect us from suicide bombers. Having often fought wars "over there," we understood in a new way that we had a fight here.

In 2008 as the world confronted the financial crisis, we understood yet again that borders could not protect us. As China's economy went, so did ours. As our economy went, so did the world's. In both cases, we had to pull ourselves up, take a deep breath and imagine the time when we would return to a new normal.

### **Coalescing during a crisis**

In both cases, we came together as a country. After Sept. 11, 2001, although airplanes stood still for a time, we all hung flags, held community meetings and mourned for those lost and in pain. During the financial crisis, government and business came together to do what was necessary, albeit with outcomes that created hardship for many. Nonetheless, we persisted and moved forward.

The new coronavirus is different. It is both democratic and random, except by age and underlying medical condition. It doesn't matter if you are a U.S. senator or a nurse, you may get the virus.

One case in a community can close schools, given the seemingly easy contagion. Indeed, many Americans now expect that they will be staying in their homes sometime soon, only connected to the outside world by the internet and by their television. If you are over 60, you are already thinking about whether to go to church on Sunday or out to

dinner in a crowded restaurant. And most of us have already stopped greeting each other with a handshake or a hug, even those we know and love.

What do we do in a time of coronavirus to create community as we isolate ourselves? What do we do when the messages coming from the president are often confused, when experts say one thing and the leadership says another? The best way to get through this crisis is to confront it; to prepare, plan and proceed even when it is hard; to realize action is urgent but no need to panic.

### **During times like these, we must treat one another graciously**

For the next months we need to be easy with each other, generous to each other and kind. Stay connected by the internet or by the telephone. Put apps on your phone, computer or device that allow you to facetime, skype and zoom. Make an extra effort to use these apps to create a virtual community. If you have none of these devices, use a telephone to stay in touch, to reach out even more to those you love.

And you can use the greeting that women do in cultures where we can't shake hands with men. Put your hand across your chest and nod, not too close but with respect and recognition. Use caution and prudence and cancel a meeting rather than worry about whether it's the right thing to do. Don't go on that trip or excursion right now; wait until you can do so without concern and anxiety. Imagine life some time from now when this awful time will be behind us and act day by day in ways that will bring that time closer.

In terms of our leadership, listen to local authorities. Governors are taking the reins in many states, delivering the tough love needed to move through this crisis as quickly and as safely as possible. Turn on local news, not just national news, and stay up to date with your own community.

None of this is easy. The social distancing is hard in a time when we need each other so badly. But we can still find love in a time of coronavirus. We just have to invent, innovate and do what Americans have always done in a time of crisis, sticking together even when we must be apart.