

An Uphill Battle with a Tickle-Down Effect

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The whole world has been in the grip of a foe, invisible yet devastating in its effect, since before the beginning of the Lunar Year of the Rat. I've always found the timing of this pandemic to be quite ironic. 20/20 vision is said to be perfect, yet in 2020, the current year, everything seems like such a blur.

From the moment the virus was discovered, before the Chinese New Year, to when it began spreading, a cloud of uncertainty hung over many nations, including the Macau SAR. The season, normally characterized by family gatherings, festivities and celebrations, was tainted with mourning and painful memories for many. Government stay-at-home orders were drastic but necessary and, in retrospect, effective. Everyone in Macau cooperated. Stores were shuttered and offices closed. Students stayed home while teachers created online classrooms. It felt unreal. It felt like the worst of times.



I am almost certain that the majority of us were thankful for our gadgets as we found ourselves “stuck” at home. Every day, we caught up in newsfeeds, shared and re-shared snapshots of silent and eerily empty streets, of iconic, picture-perfect landmarks in crowdless plazas, of city squares, alleys and stairways. Suddenly, we were touching base with people we knew through calls, texts and emails, sending good wishes and reassurances. We were sharing prayers, even relyriced songs, memes, and parodies just to brighten each other's day. We were rekindling friendships and reconnecting with family. We were rediscovering learning through webinars and online courses, engaging in forgotten hobbies and pastimes and even binge-watching. Our gadgets, once cursed and addictive distractions, were



now essential tools that helped keep us sane and connected. We were, after all, “stuck” with a lot of time on our hands, a rarity in an erstwhile ever busy lifestyle.

Having rediscovered the gift of time, many found the courage and the inspiration to create something meaningful. Such creative ventures drew family members together. Live meeting and conferencing apps stitched a virtual patchwork of individuals spread out across nations. Social media was, and continues to be, flooded with COVID-inspired posts, some condemning, others sympathetic, some desperate, still others encouraging. We were pushing one another to look on the bright side, to hang on, to keep fighting, to keep staying positive and hopeful, to not give up.



A few times, we ventured out of our homes for the occasional visit to the supermarket, the post office, the pharmacy, the bank, or to run other essential errands, while trying to maintain 1-meter distance, we did not hesitate to offer help to strangers. We provided assistance as some struggled to complete the mandatory health declaration forms. We carried their groceries, or simply had an in-queue chat. We communicated with nods of our heads. We spoke up a little

for fear that the masks would muffle our voices. Our unmasked eyes became more expressive. One look and we all knew we were “in this together”.

This trying time is THE second chance which we have been given -- a chance to rethink our purpose, to be grateful for things we have probably been taking for granted under normal circumstances. We've rediscovered relationships and the need for innovation and resourcefulness. The loss of lives, though painful, has reminded us of the finite nature of living, the limited time within which to find meaning, to make a difference. We appreciate the mundane aspects of everyday living like the home in which we live, the internet, the availability of electricity and water, the availability and variety of foodstuffs. We appreciate the government incentives and relief packages, the medical services, the transportation system, the rubbish disposal system, the custodians of our streets and buildings who work tirelessly to keep our environment clean and safe.

Though schools remain closed, students and teachers continue to work very hard to keep up the momentum of learning, each drawing inspiration from the other. I am fortunate to be teaching a group of very engaged and conscientious F4 and F5 students. They are my source of strength as I, too, continue to learn from them and with them. Yes, we all miss learning within the relatively distraction-free environment of the classroom. We miss the personal interactions. We miss



getting ourselves mentally prepared for each and every class. We miss all those daily rituals that we may have seen as tedious but necessary chores.

Despite the seeming bleakness, we need to allow the current situation to fuel our

unceasing search for that spark of goodness, no matter how small, so that we can rekindle the flames of compassion, generosity, gratitude and humanity in one another. We need to humble ourselves and open our hearts and our minds to our vulnerability, to how much we need each other, and to how much we CAN DO for each other if we only try. As long as we continue to show our best, we celebrate what is best in humanity. If we remain “in this together”, we can rest assured that, as the goodness trickles down, though ever so slowly, the prospect of a better and brighter future will eventually become clear.

Vocabulary

1. foe: 敵人
2. tainted with mourning and painful memories: 難免帶點哀痛的回憶
3. gadgets: 小玩意
4. eerily empty streets: 街道顯得形單隻影，氣氛詭異
5. rekindling friendships: 重燃友情
6. ventured out: 冒險外出
7. muffle our voices: 減弱我們的聲音
8. keep up the momentum: 保持良好狀態
9. seeming bleakness: 看似淒涼
10. rest assured: 可以放心



Grammar Point:

“in this together” (paragraph 5 ... last line)

It means we are all in the same boat. We face the same problem and by working together we will overcome this situation.

Example:

We're in this together, and if we united and we inter-culturally cooperated, then that might be the key to humanity's survival. (By Jeremy Gilley, founder of the nonprofit organization Peace One Day)



“prepared for”(paragraph 7... line 13)

To do or acquire what is necessary ; to be ready for something.

Example:

I am prepared for the worst, but hope for the best. (By Benjamin Disraeli, former prime minister of the United Kingdom)



Picture source:

https://www.google.com/search?q=%E7%96%AB%E7%97%87%E4%B8%8B%E7%B6%B2%E4%B8%8A%E4%B8%8A%E8%AA%B2&sxsrf=ALeKk01D3C143oTY2iXUTemvkICm0gOkCQ:1589512092924&source=Inms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiLwKj98bTpAhWKy4sBHVHkDwUQ_AUoAnoECAsQBA&biw=1024&bih=625#imgre=_3L7sjPC4HXWdM

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