

Multi-Faith Resources: Alienation & Separation During a Pandemic

Alienation and separation is a common theme found in religion and society. People live in harmony until that harmony is ruptured. From ancient times until the present day, people across the globe have realized a disruption from life as they knew it due to religious, political, socio-economic and health reasons. Although COVID-19 is a state that has been put upon us, we still have choices. Alienation and separation provide opportunity to create new meaning as illustrated in the spiritual wisdom from religious leaders below. Following your reading, we've included a spiritual exercise to support your contemplation on these writings and to discover your own meaning.

Religious leaders respond

The Presbyterian Church in Canada on “Hope, Gratitude and Solidarity”

When life's harmony is ruptured it brings chaos. This is where alienation and separation come together as we unite out of choice to place hope, gratitude and solidarity at the forefront of new beginnings. This is the message of hope. Canadians are experiencing the devastating impact of COVID-19 in what has become a rapidly evolving crisis. Understandably, this crisis has brought about feelings of anxiety, apprehension and fear. Critical elements of our daily lives are being thrown into uncertainty: health, employment, financial security, recreational activities, as well as our ability to gather as worshipping communities. In view of these difficulties, we as religious leaders wish to bring forward a message of hope, gratitude and solidarity to all people who call Canada home.

<https://presbyterian.ca/2020/03/31/interfaith-message-covid-19/>

Senior Thai Monk Offers a Buddhist Perspective on Dealing with COVID-19

What better time than now to find within our own being that which responds with a view to otherness. A time to put aside personal needs and find peace and hope in the support of others as we minimize feelings of alienation.

We need to stay connected and encourage people to express their goodness from within, which ultimately helps others. <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/senior-thai-monk-offers-a-buddhist-perspective-on-dealing-with-covid-19>



Ramadan during coronavirus – with a virtual community

The word community suggests belonging and connection yet difficult to realize in the midst of alienation and separation. Now is the time to consider how traditions and religious rituals can still bring a community together.

Ramadan begins this week (April 23 – May 23) even as the coronavirus pandemic up-ends life around the world. The crisis is forcing Muslims to re-think traditions and find new approaches to one of Islam's most important religious rituals. <https://en.qantara.de/content/covid-19-pandemic-ramadan-during-coronavirus-with-a-virtual-community>

Pope Francis

It is not comfortable to live in times of uncertainty and confinement. We can remain disheartened and separated or creatively open ourselves up to new possibilities.

I'm living this as a time of great uncertainty. It's a time for inventing, for creativity, he said. The Pope points out that, the creativity of the Christian needs to show forth in opening up new horizons, opening windows, opening transcendence toward God and toward people, and in creating new ways of being at home. It's not easy to be confined to your house. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en.html>

Indigenous Education Network

In the face of fear it is optimism, commitment and collective hearts which bring wellbeing to the whole. During this time of great upheaval and hardship we remain optimistic in the face of fear and we remain committed to justice in the face of new threats. We also continue to hold in our collective hearts and minds a beautiful vision for the health and wellbeing of our Indigenous peoples, our Mother Earth, and the full Circle of Life. <https://www.ienearth.org/ien-covid-19-statement/>

Hindu spiritual practices

Emotional and spiritual health is impacted when life is difficult and uncertain. Hindu teachings and practices provide essential ways to care for ourselves and others.

<https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/hindu-spiritual-practices-manage-anxiety-covid>

In the face of the financial and physical stress brought on by COVID-19, it can be difficult to consider our emotional and spiritual health. However, in a world of uncertainty, Hindu teachings and practices are helpful in taking care of ourselves in the most essential and basic of ways.

Jewish responses to the Coronavirus

Throughout history the Jewish people have survived by standing together, helping and supporting one another. This is resilience in the face of fear and anxiety.

The world is gripped by the coronavirus and understandably, rampant emotions include fear and anxiety. Jewish leaders suggest this is also a time for traditional values like chesed v'rachamim – kindness and compassion – to shine through. <https://www.cjnews.com/living-jewish/jewish-responses-to-the-coronavirus>

SIKH Coalition report

We have not chosen alienation and separation from those we love to be what is normal. This choice is for this time only so that continued health and safety may be realized for all.

This time of upheaval and crisis is difficult, but it requires us all to make the best choices for the health and safety of all. Together, we will continue to adapt as we look forward to a time when things will once again feel more normal. <https://www.sikhcoalition.org/blog/2020/update-covid-19-gurdwara-gatherings/>

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

We aren't the first Christians to face a global pandemic. In fact, now is a good time to learn how we might deal with this world-being-shut-down. My point in noting these early Christians is for one basic reason: that we will choose hope over confusion, humility over arrogance, empathy over self-interest, faith over fear. <https://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/Communications/Dispatches-from-Brian-Stillier/April-2020/How-Early-Christians-Handled-Their-%E2%80%98COVID-19%E2%80%99>

In-Time Practical Spiritual Self-Care: Practice of Contemplative Reading

Perhaps, one of the above readings have caught your attention. If so, the following spiritual practice of Contemplative Reading offers you a way to spiritually engage with the reading.

What is Contemplative Reading?¹

Contemplative Reading is a spiritual practice that opens you to deeper connection and meaning or wisdom through reading short pieces of sacred or inspirational writing.

How to Practice Contemplative Reading?ⁱ

Choose a short piece of the sacred /inspirational writing above that has meaning for you.

Slowly read and ask yourself:

Which word or phrase connects with me right now?

Pick a word or phrase that your heart feels drawn to, rather than something you feel you “*should*” choose. You may choose to write it down.

Slowly read the piece of writing again. Ask yourself:

How does this word or phrase relate to my life right now?

Think about and/or write down any thoughts you have. It is okay if nothing comes to mind. Just noticing what grabs your attention is important.

Slowly read the piece of writing one last time. Ask yourself:

What am I being called to be or to do?

Examples may include: Am I being asked to trust? Accept? Make a change? To continue?

¹ Contemplative Reading is a descriptive term for the practice known as *Lectio Divina*. For more information you may be interested in Thelma Hall's work: Hall, T. (1988) *Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina*. Paulist Press pp.36-56.

Reflection

After practicing Contemplative Reading, it can be helpful to reflect on your experience. Ask yourself:

How was the experience of this practice for me?

What are my thoughts? Feelings? Emotions?

What surprised me?



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ⁱ The African Bible Study Method. Retrieved from: <http://www.takomaparkpc.org/AfricanBibleStudy.html>