LOVE THE ONE YOU’RE WITH

As the days turn into weeks and the weeks turn into months this whole thing begins to resemble a medieval castle under siege. The enemy outside the castle walls is the virus and it has us surrounded. We do our best to stay safely behind the fortress walls bust it is necessary for us to occasionally foray out, with great risk, to forage for food. Meanwhile we better hope either the court jester has an unending hysterical stand-up routine, or the others are immensely entertaining.

Returning to our dilemma in 2020 I recently had a couple do a Facetime session that they opened with the proclamation that they had spent more time together in the first week of this then in the entire 40 years of their marriage. They were completely unprepared for this much togetherness. Similarly, I see parents with young kids scheduling appointments, all on-line of course, just so they can have 50 minutes to themselves because they feel like locking the kids in the castle dungeon for the entire day. For those alone the ones they are with are with are courtesy of the internet. The head of Match.com stated that this is a particularly rich time for internet dating because potential couples have lots of time to get to know each other. She suggested that having a “virtual date” online solved a lot of questions such as physical contact, and who pays the bill.

But it appears to me based upon the number of people in my practice and what I am gleaning from the media, that under this life under siege some people are faring better and worse within the confines of their castle. One general difference is that introverts, those people that get restored from their day with a good book, or gardening, or simply spacing out alone in front of the television are faring much better then the extroverts who are used to patting others on the back at the bar or talking to a group of people at their book club or school meeting. For extroverts they have towork a lot harder and may need to rely on social media to re-fill their empty tanks. These are two basic differences but let’s look at eight areas in which people who are thriving in this era and those who are having difficulty may be different. I want to address eight areas in which the successful people may differ from those having difficulty.

1. The first is how people **manage the three psychological “U’s”- Unpredictable, Uncontrollable, and Unending.** People that are doing better through this appear to be better able to either accept that these three things are just part of it or to change them by saying….”yes its unpredictable but I am listening to experts who are searching for the answers and I trust in them”, or “I can do my best to control my environment and even standing in place is taking an action” or finally, “this will come to an end, we can’t be sure what it will look like but it will end”.
2. People who are **planning activities** are doing better. Whether it is planning an outing with the kids or a time for a board game, or even a virtual happy hour with the neighbors. Planning an activity, however simple gives you something to look forward to and structure your day around.
3. In a related manner, having a **routine**, those households that have included structure also seem to fare better. Where parents set up an hour to hour schedule for their kids to follow- getting up at a scheduled rime,
4. Sharing how one feels, as much as it sounds shrink-like, checking in on how the others feel, especially children, may have a lasting effect on them

Finally, don’t just “love the one you’re with”, appreciate, value, and entertain, and connect with them. Give them space and hold them close. When this is all over, you’ll be grateful you have them with you.