



During this watershed period of time I've tried to meditate even more—to notice more. One conclusion I feel it's safe to come to is the fact that this period of time is about change to our race. A quote from Carolina Head Coach Will Muschamp comes to mind as something that bears being mindful about: "Change is inevitable. Growth is optional." The following paragraphs are nineteen items I've noticed and hope to grow from in some manner. My hope is that it spurs others to do the same.

I feel like we're getting a jump on hurricane season. Unsure if that makes sense, but it's how I feel. Conversely, I'm proud of my home state and Beaufort County, in particular, for preparing us for this over the last four fall hurricane seasons. Certainly not fun times, it could have been a ton worse, but it did toughen us up.

Life after COVID-19 won't be the same as it was before, nor should it be. We keep looking for this elusive "new norm." I would like to think my new norm is understanding there was never such a thing, only a routine I thought was set. What is – or was – ever sure? An unseen enemy has brought human existence to its collective knees. Up is down. Right is wrong. Not visiting your grandparents is caring. Not going to work or school is the responsible thing to do.

As I type this, I realize that I need to be more grateful that I'm an introverted homebody. That said, I hope to become gentler with myself. I believe I'm doing far better overall than my fellow extroverted humans; however, I found myself limited in a revealing way. Before COVID-19, I was taking writing classes to begin a freelance writing career. The day before the shutdown, I asked the Angels to throw any roadblocks out for me now, if it was going to happen at all. (I have a history with false starts and my passion of writing.) Little did I know that having

more perceived time wouldn't translate into class time for me, but for my daughter.

Not that I didn't already have the following opinion, but there's a difference in thinking something and experiencing something. Homeschooling is hard and teachers don't get paid enough. Thank you, Beaufort County School District, for being on top of things, and Mrs. Julie Burns at Lady's Island Elementary, in particular. I thought we were fortunate to have Mrs. Burns teach our daughter for a second year in row, but now I know it. Can you move up to fifth grade next year? Pretty please!

Whenever I do go out, I notice a general wariness from others and sometimes see fear in the eyes of my fellow man.

I think I'm in the minority, but I never liked handshakes before COVID-19. I'm not biased against who the other hand is attached to, I just never liked the germ swap. I don't consider myself a germaphobe, I just feel that it's common sense that when you touch your face after handshakes or make contact in public places (door handles, grocery carts, etc.), without washing your hands, you get sick more often. Simple as that. I actually came to the conclusion that I just needed to live with the fact that most don't, or rather didn't, think twice about handshakes; I needed to get over it, so I wouldn't be rude. (I particularly dislike being in a restaurant after having washed up and someone comes up to shake my hand.) I suppose it's fair to say that the apocalypse of this social practice has come in on its pale horse. All that said, I think there will always be situations where you need to look a person in the eye and shake his or her hand. My hope is that now it'll mean even more—two or more people now should realize there's more skin in the game than before COVID-19. I believe this was always the case, it just took something extreme for the masses to acknowledge it.

Some things never change. True politicians (both in and out of office) are ever the opportunists. I only make this note, since I'm required to monitor the news more often during the pandemic. I typically ignore politics, but find it icky, that during this unprecedented crisis, the term, bipartisan, is the preamble for treachery. In a way, these people, with their perceived power, are the ones that need our thoughts and prayers the most.

Pollution is at an all-time low in recent history. Gas mileage in our vehicles is insane right now.

Watching old football games and golf tournaments isn't so bad. I keep telling myself that, at least.

I'm grateful to enjoy more time with my family. That's a blessing all unto itself. I always felt I didn't get enough time with my wife and daughter, so this period is wonderful in terms of family time. Conversely, I realize some consider all this "quality time" to be a prison sentence. Even more of a gratitude opportunity there.

One thing I am enjoying is happy hour FaceTime. It's like, why haven't we done this before? I wouldn't have scoffed at this notion previously, but it would have gone into the nebulous, "yeah, we'll get to that later," file. I actually feel closer to some people now, regardless of the actual distance between us.

This period of time has caused me to wonder how many mornings I've woken up with "I should..." in my heart and let it color my day? How often have I "shoulded" all over myself after warning others of the pitfalls of duty without contemplation?

Until this disease, named after a beer, hits its apogee, we just don't know anything. Now is the time for patience with our fellow humans, not taciturn "bravery" doggedly trying to get back the norm we're apparently not supposed to have any longer. This is the birth, death, rebirth on a global scale and we will survive, thrive, and be better for it. I believe that and hope you all can see a spark of hope there, too.

In closing, I'll leave you with another quote, this time from Socrates: "The secret of change is to focus your energy, not on fighting for the old, but on building the new."