



## HAPPY 2021 TO YOU ALL



### Reflections On the Covid Experience: What Are the Lessons and Learnings We Can Take From It?

First, of course, it must be stated that the covid experience, for those of us who have not been forced to live through World Wars or any war, who have not known famines or the devastation of natural disasters, who have not lived through massive political unrest with accompanying violence and killings, who have not fled for our lives as victims of persecution and racial genocides or as protestors of authoritarian and suppressive regimes, has been the biggest tragedy of our lifetimes. Approximately 1.7 million people, family members and souls, just like you and I, are no longer living. Unparalleled economic calamity has caused job loss, business collapses and critical financial repercussions. For all too many, lives have been thrown into profound insecurity in regards to putting food on the table, paying rent or mortgages, or having any savings left with which to build any kind of future. Human beings have throughout our history been subjected to events and circumstances which, if we survive them, have left us traumatized, destitute and alone. But, at least for me, not in my own “backyard”, not in my lifetime, not people I know or know of.

Yet, to be true to my own experience of the changes and upheaval that covid has precipitated, there have been several unimagined learnings and gifts that it has brought to my life and many of my clients’.

The profound disorientation and uncertainty that lives have been thrown into has given rise to a far deeper personal and collective vulnerability. Clients, suddenly bereft of taken-for-granted opportunities to see family and friends, have had to fall back on their own company. Time spent alone or in solitude, which previously had been avoided at all cost and even perceived as frightening or boring, has yielded a quieter mind and a greater knowing and comfort with oneself. Perhaps even discovering as the American poet, Marianne Moore, has wisely written that the most powerful and effective cure for loneliness is solitude.

And indirectly confirming this observation by the philosopher Blaise Pascal: “ All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone.”

Furthermore, the covid experience has shown how utterly dependent all of us have become on **externals** of one kind or another for our pleasures and “good times”, happiness and fulfillment and even our personal sense of worth and value. Without being able to constantly socialize, without the near endless supply of amusement and distraction that entertainment provides – movies, theatre, restaurants, gyms, travel, sporting events and bars – deeper, more meaningful questions are arising for some like: “Who am I?” “Is there a source of happiness, peace and fulfillment within me that is **not** given to me by anyone or anything outside, but because it lies within, cannot be taken away by things like viruses, shattered love affairs, lost pleasures or any and all of the vicissitudes of life?” Or how important is developing and deepening or returning to a spiritual presence or dimension in my life?”

The covid experience has facilitated in quite a few a far deeper, more authentic and heartfelt, experientially-based sense of gratitude and a shaken, but never as sincere appreciation and thankfulness. Whether it be for our most loving and supportive relationships; the kindness of neighbourhoods, store clerks and delivery people; the courage, dedication and selflessness of front line workers; or the remarkable generosity of spirit and good nature of musicians, singers and performing artists giving of themselves and their talents for free. Yes, we are truly all in this together. Do we need more evidence than this pandemic to know that our very lives are in each others’ hands?

Finally, certainly for me and others the covid experience has introduced me to a quieter, simpler, softer, easier, gentler, slower, slower ( I needed to say that twice) lifestyle than anything I have experienced since I had to be a “somebody” and make it in the world.

It has brought attention and priority to the most simple and immediate, but chronically overlooked, pleasures and nutrients for a rich, connected and spiritually infused life. Ah, the joy of Presence! Of having a mind quiet enough and a stillness established enough to replace the relentless, frenetic, impulsive movements and fast pace of my prior way of being. This silence and stillness has allowed me to be available, to receive the smallest pleasures in the present moment. In and by means of connecting with the “suchness of things”, the stream of Life, the Universal Process of which we are all a part. For example, the next breath we take which might be infused with the scent and refreshment of rain. The sound of the songbird outside our window, a point of expression of the divine, that knows not of viruses, economic collapses or mandatory quarantines. The taste of good food that we have been graced to have provided to us. The delights of the sensation of the wind on our cheeks or the child-like wonder of watching clouds slowly drift over an expansive blue sky. Reminding us of the permanence of change and the ephemeral, will-of-the-wisp nature of life itself.

“So you should view this fleeting world  
A star at dawn,a bubble in a stream,  
A flash of lightening in a summer cloud,  
A flickering lamp, a phantom and a dream.”  
The Diamond Sutra

Be well, my friends. Be happy. Know peace.

**ALL INDIVIDUAL, RELATIONSHIP AND FAMILY COUNSELLING IS BEING CONDUCTED ON-LINE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE**

I am so delighted and surprised to report that on-line psychotherapy with my clients has lost none of its intimacy, depth and value in the experience. In some ways it is even more engaging and immediate because we are positioned closer to each other than in my office settings. And, for many clients, it is much more convenient and logistically easy to manage.

**To book an appointment:**

**604-732-9091  
604-535-4220**

**[www.joelbrass.com](http://www.joelbrass.com) / [counsellingbc.com](http://counsellingbc.com)**

I so look forward to the resumption of my *Healing the Original Pain of Your Life: The Inner Child Seminar, Relationships: The Work of Love* and new *One Year Program* (see program description below).

Fingers crossed for April, May or June, 2021.

To register or for more information, please contact my new seminar coordinator, Brendan Starling, at (778) 866-2205 or [seminarsjoelbrass@gmail.com](mailto:seminarsjoelbrass@gmail.com) He is looking for something to coordinate.

**HEALING YOUR OWN STUFF: FOR SERIOUS PRACTITIONERS ONLY**

**A ONE YEAR PROGRAM IN THE DEEPEST EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALING OF YOUR LIFE**

Your issues or problems or history or repetitive, self-defeating patterns in relationships or life are never going to break open and transform with a piecemeal, "I'll fix this and then I'll fix that" approach. It is the deep-seated, constant, undermining emotional and spiritual malaise that lies underneath and behind these manifestations that you need to identify, face, heal and release. This One Year Program will combine the deepest emotional healing work I know how to offer with an emphasis on the cultivation, development and far greater expansion of your connection to a spiritual dimension of life. A spiritual practice is not only valuable but indispensable to your inner work. If you register and give your all to this program you will not be choosing to "rearrange the deck chairs on the Titanic" but to draw ever nearer to "Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily. Life is but a dream." In short, trusting your Self and trusting Life. But don't be mistaken. This takes courage, vulnerability, radical self-honesty and unquestioning commitment to pull off. The benefits of like-minded, supportive companions and a guide you trust are also extremely useful for these purposes.

**Format:** Six weekends over the course of one calendar year.  
10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**Start-Up Date:** Whether we can meet in person or go on-line via Zoom conferencing, I am hoping for an April 25/26, 2021 launch

**To Register:** Contact Brendan or myself for more information or to register.  
Numbers will be small, in the 4-8 participant range.

