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10 June, 2020

The Card Shark

"My help comes from God, the maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 121:2

Dear Ones,

Is the math not adding up for you? It's definitely not adding up for me! What math? The emotional stuff... the inner addition, subtraction and multiplication that we do with our feelings, emotional landscape, inner life.

I look around me and see everyone coping so well! And Mr. Ford is moving us gently to phase two very soon (Lambton Shores, OK, don't hold your breath!). Some are back to work... and down the road *I know they went and visited their grandkids!* (Shocker!)... There seems to be a sense of... would we call it?... 'normalcy' to our lives now? Maybe 'normal' is a stretch. How about 'familiarity'. We got this.

So where are all these negative feelings coming from? Snap at the spouse. Kick the cat. Curse the coffee maker... you know what I mean. That stuff – what ever it is – that is sneaking into your behavioral repertoire that is *way out of character* for you. And me!

Psychiatrists are teaching us so much right now. One thing is that it is *perfectly normal* to be ambushed by multiple often conflicting emotions at a time like this. It's like your brain is a card shark, flicking through the deck of 52 emotional cards that you have, and randomly tossing them down onto the table of your soul. "There you are, how about some rage? Whoopee! How about hilarity? Why not? And a dash of despair? You got it, coming right up!"

What to do?

A couple of things. First, **laugh about it**. Might as well! Cuz crying isn't going to make you feel any better... and laughing helps you take one tiny emotional step back. Like saying to that card shark, "Thanks, but no thanks. I don't need that emotion right now."

Then **cry about it**. Yes! Some of those deeper and more difficult emotions only come out when we really need them... fear, anxiety, panic, depression. Rather than making them go away, invite them in, clear some space at the table, and really let them be expressed. Cry all the tears. And then go off and do something else.

Lastly, **pray about it**. Our children at HSUC are wise. When we came home to our renovated building I asked them, "Are we done with putting the animals into Noah's Ark now?" No way! The Ark and the animals were paraded over from the Legion and we have used them every Sunday since (Special thanks here to Brynn Ciufo for her amazing origami ark and animals shared every Sunday at Zoom-worship!). Why do we need them still? Because we always need to be reminded that wherever

we go, we are safe in God's care. Even into fear, anxiety, depression. Even into pandemic. We are safe. Place yourself into God's care, and all shall be well.

Grace to you, and peace.

Kate

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PS.

If you want to know more, here is a list of common emotions during this time. Remember – if you're on this chart, YOU ARE NORMAL!

1. You're burned out.
2. You're angry.
3. You're...surprisingly calm.
4. You're spiraling about what might happen.
5. You're struggling with working from home.
6. You're mourning canceled events.
7. You're yo-yoing between hopefulness and hopelessness.
8. You're craving a freaking hug, damn it.
9. You're stuck and unsure.
10. You're guilty about your relative safety, security, or privilege.
11. You're deep in some existential regret.
12. You're grieving.
13. You're feeling inadequate about your productivity.
14. You're in over your head with your kids.
15. You're dealing with a resurgence of unrelated past trauma.
16. You're numb.
17. You're feeling something else entirely (how about joy?, relief? Gratitude!)

(from *17 Totally Normal Things to Feel Right Now, According to Therapists*, by Anna Borges, Found on the website *Self*, published April 10, 2020. <https://www.self.com/story/pandemic-therapy-trends>)

*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

