



Stay Distant Physically, Not Socially

April 5, 2020

As a writer, I'm a stickler for finding the right words to communicate what I mean. As we read and hear about "social distancing," it's important to recognize that what we are practicing during this pandemic is "physical distancing." For while we need to remain apart physically, we can and must remain connected socially. People are social animals; we have a basic biologically-based human need for social interaction. So while I'll include below some substantive information about mentoring and an invitation to discuss retirement via zoom later this week, my principal message to you is this:

Reach out to someone every day. Whether you are living alone or with a family, working from home or not working at all, coping well or struggling, healthy (as I hope you are) or worried about someone who isn't, *make at least one call a day to someone.* Try to do it by phone or video call. Stay connected or reconnect with friends, relatives, colleagues and neighbors, especially those who live alone or are vulnerable. Find out how they are doing and let them know you hope they're all right. Use those calls to remind them and yourself of our social bonds, which will survive and maybe even strengthen, when all this is over and we can be together physically once again.

Mentoring During the Pandemic

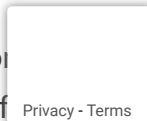
One of the people to be in touch with is your mentor or mentee. In these uncertain and scary times, mentoring might not be "top of mind," but it should be. I'm not talking about the aspects of mentoring we usually discuss. There are so many things to worry about that are more critical right now than meeting development goals or achieving career objectives. At some point in the future, those things will become important again, but right now, there is a more fundamental aspect of mentoring that is vital to emphasize: mentoring is a *personal relationship* based on caring, support and trust. Keeping that relationship active can help mentors and mentees better manage stress, anxiety, frustration and loneliness during a period of isolation.

People need each other now more than ever. If you are in a mentoring relationship, whether formally through a program or informally on your own, mentor and mentee need to let each other know that you care, you are interested in how the other is doing, and you will be supportive, especially in this difficult time. Here are few suggestions for how to do that:

1. *Check in with each other regularly, via video call if at all possible.* Email is fine for just checking in and saying hello. Phone calls are much better because hearing your voice is more immediate and personal. But video is the most powerful and engaging method of communicating across distances. It's incredibly easy today to set up a video call on zoom, facetime, skype or some other app, and there's no reason not to do it from time to time. Video ensures that you pay attention to each other, promotes more meaningful conversations, reinforces trust, and creates a stronger feeling of connection. Seeing and paying attention to each other's gestures and facial expressions, and being able to focus on and react to the same thing instantaneously as we interact in a video chat, can preserve some of the in-person contact that we crave.
2. *Help each other adapt and cope.* Discuss how you're both managing while you're stuck at home. Whether you are a professional with 25 years of experience or a very junior associate, we are all new at this. Everyone is learning how to adapt and cope, and some people are doing better at it than others, no matter their age, position or intellectual brilliance. People who rarely or never worked from home before may be having a tough time; even people who are accustomed to working from home may be struggling with isolation or with the added burden of spouses sharing workspace and childcare responsibilities. Discuss your mutual fears, concerns and challenges. Edify and learn from each other. If you are adept at the technical issues of remote work and your mentor isn't, offer some helpful tips. If you are an older mentor who has survived other ordeals in the past, provide reassurance to a young mentee that "we will get through this."
3. *Get to know each other better.* With everyone working from home, we are growing accustomed to seeing kids on laps and pets wandering in and out during zoom meetings. We are getting a better sense of how others live and the kinds of pressures they face. Use this time to learn more about each other, and to practice empathy and compassion. This greater understanding can deepen your relationship.
4. *Remind each other that you have much to be grateful for.* Amid all the dislocation and anxiety, it is essential to acknowledge how fortunate you are. No matter how hard things get, tell each other about something you are grateful for that day, whether it is the ability to keep working while at home, the opportunity to have more time with your family, the beauty of the view from your window, your own good health, or the people who are bravely continuing to serve your community by delivering your groceries, teaching your children online, or providing health care under dire conditions.

These simple steps will benefit both mentor and mentee, and will help your mentoring relationship survive and thrive during this challenging period. It will also strengthen the interpersonal skills that will serve you well in relationships with clients, colleagues and others when the virus danger is gone and "normal" life resumes.

[Retirement by Design](#)

Have the past few weeks affected your thoughts or plans about retirement? I've been hearing from  who are re-evaluating or accelerating their retirement plans now that they are away from their of

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because their work is drying up. The reason they are contacting me is to thank me for writing *Retirement by Design*, which is helping them think through the question of what their retirement could look like. Many have found that this period of enforced solitude is a good time to start working on the questions and exercises presented in the book.

If you are working through the book and designing your retirement, I would love to hear about your reactions, self-discoveries, and experiences. Please [get in touch with me](#) and share them. **If you would like to discuss your retirement thoughts or planning with a small group of people, I will host a zoom conversation at 1:00 PT on Thursday, April 9. If you would like to participate, let me know. I will send the link to the first 5 people who request it.**

If you don't yet have your copy of *Retirement by Design*, you can order the print version or download it from [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), [Powell's](#) and [other book sellers](#). And if you like the book, **please post a review** on any or all of those sites!

Here are a recent article, review and interview about *Retirement by Design*:

- [Retirement: A Time for Jubilación](#): The term for retirement in Spanish is “jubilación,” or a cause for rejoicing. My article explains why that is a healthy and constructive way to think about retirement.
- [Having Fun Cracking Retirement](#) (book review): This reviewer calls *Retirement by Design* “one of the most comprehensive books covering all aspects of retirement that I have read.” He also notes, “After nearly 9 years of retirement, and indeed spending nearly 4 years blogging on the subject of retirement, I feel I know what I am talking about. Even then, there were a few things in this book that made me wish I had considered some of them.”
- [FabAfterFifty](#): An interview about my book in which we focus on its purpose, unique characteristics, and key take-aways.

Upcoming Interview:

- National Association of Women Lawyers: NAWL's Book Club featuring *Retirement by Design* by Ida O. Abbott, moderated by Lisa Horowitz, May 5. You can learn more and register [here](#).

Recognition:

I was honored to be selected as one of the [featured women in “Women in Law: The Next 100 Years.”](#) This initiative celebrates the impact and influence of women in the legal industry, and exploring the challenges, opportunities and vision for the next 100 years in order to continue progressing women in the law. The initiative is led by the firm McCullough Robertson, which was named by Lawyers Weekly as 2019 Law Firm of the Year in Australia.

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