



Connections: Disruption & Healing

by Ken Robinson

The Coronavirus is 1/70,000th of 1 centimetre. Neither great military might, nor the United Nations, have been able to accomplish what it has done. It has caused the global community to act almost completely in unison! It has unsettled billions, covering all strata of humans, from the wealthiest to the poorest, from the most powerful to those most humble. It has changed life in every society.

Ministry in a Coronavirus world requires us to see everyday life with new eyes. A normal, reasonably relaxed life relies on numerous things happening routinely and predictably. From (personal) morning bathing, dressing and breakfast routines to (social) traffic patterns, store hours, and eating out we can handle much of life with minimal stress, almost in a semi-automatic mode. Our brains can manage the routine events without needing much fully conscious awareness. This conserves energy and avoids the health downsides of too much hyper-alertness.

But in a Covid-19 world many predictable routines of life are disrupted. Not only is this draining but it is very unsettling. Covid-19 has ushered in a new level of vigilance, requiring extra alertness to several things – from preparation of PPE, to vaccination, to changing regulations. Common sicknesses that we normally shrug off now may demand taking a test.

These interruptions to the regularity and familiarity of life interfere with multiple connections that provide our secure ground. We are connected to things, to places, to routines, to tasks, and of course to people. Loss or disruption of familiar connections can have serious consequences, especially when prolonged and unrelenting. People can begin to lose even their connection to themselves, to their sense of identity. Disruptive behaviour often follows. After the 1918 (Spanish) flu there was a marked upswing in protests and demonstrations.

There's an opportunity to bring simple, crucial healing ministry in this situation. It is so basic we may not see how crucial it is. I'm talking about connecting with others. Many times during these two years I have received a call or a message at times when I was needing some fresh perspective or encouragement. Sometimes it was a request for my help, which not only gave me another focus and purpose but also disrupted the 'funk' I might have been in. One friend, who knows some of my personal struggles, has often connected to share support and provide affirmation. Oftentimes the

message will come totally unexpectedly, after many weeks of no contact, and really speak to me. Such friends are like gold, being the hands of the Christ. We can be such friends.

Then there are other, less comprehensive contacts but absolutely vital in each of our lives. At the mall near our home there is a clothing alterations shop. The lady owner, Chanchal, whose extended family are all in India, has generously helped me with a couple of special needs, and I have helped her deal with a couple of difficult customers. One time I sought to repair a quilt for Pat's birthday. The quilt has sentimental meaning for Pat. Chanchal had never encountered a quilt. The project came to mean so much that on the evening of Pat's birthday Chanchal called (she had never phoned me or our house) and she and her husband sang Happy Birthday to Pat. Our connection has become one of appreciation and encouragement. We recognise something deeper, though we rarely get to talk. It is the connection of recognising the value, the soul, the worth of the other. Now it only takes a word, or wave or even just a catching of the eyes as I go past. I always feel better for that connection. I know she feels similarly.

We all have such people in our lives where there is a spark or recognition of human worth. Especially to these people in your life do not neglect to connect. To such friends you need say very little. They already know you value them. But it means so much to have the connection every now and then to reinforce the sense of self-worth of both parties.

Then there are the everyday contacts, like the regular sales persons at shops you visit. You get to recognise some. It takes such little energy to acknowledge with a smile or a word. This is genuine ministry because that person knows they were recognised for themselves. Just such small things can turn a person's day around. You never know. You might think that these things are too trivial. But in fact even these require you to get out of your self absorption just a little bit. They strengthen your appreciation of others, and your connections.

In a world where countless connections have been disrupted, and many lives have struggled for stability and hope, we can be bearers of hope and love by simply choosing to connect.