

A Year of Many Lessons



I think most of us learned a lot this past year. There were practical things like, what is social distancing and what does 6 feet of separation look like? Does this mask make my butt look big, or should I just go with the floral print? There were more astute observations like, wow, some of my friends and family members are even more absurdly strange than I thought! It was a time of tolerance, both learned and forgotten.

Online shopping became more than just a fun pastime – it was absolutely essential, at least that’s what I told my husband as the UPS truck pulled up in front of our house yet again. I was a reluctant contributor to Jeff Bezos’ retirement account. Damn you, Amazon! You’re both a blessing and a curse.

Driving through the neighborhood’s business district became truly sad, seeing favorite stores and restaurants that had permanently closed. It became more important to support our beloved local businesses as best we could and easier to justify ordering takeout for the third time that week.

We learned our capacity for binging, whether it be eating or watching. We delved further into the bowels of Netflix than I think most of us care to admit. Even they seemed to hit a new low for some of their original programming. I especially noticed that with their “documentary” films. You could almost hear some executive screaming, “I don’t care if it’s incoherent and doesn’t make sense, just get it out there. They’ll watch anything right now!”

For those of you working from home, there was getting used to video chats and finding new

ways to get work done while working remotely. For you poor souls with young children, I don't even know what to say. You are my heroes. You're probably reconsidering any romantic notions of homeschooling you might have had.

Living close to a major freeway, I learned that fewer cars on the road translates to more noise, as the faster they go, the louder they are. The sound, at times, became an absolute roar in our backyard. Don't even get me started on motorcycles. Fewer cars on the freeway meant motorcycle riders felt free to use the long strips of asphalt as their own private speedway. It was like living on the set of *Fast and Furious, Part 10, The Rise of the Vaccine*.

I learned a few things about myself, too. First of all, any thoughts of letting my hair go gray have been permanently dismissed, locked away in a box, buried in the back yard with the key forever thrown away. It's not a look I'm wanting to perfect.

One thing I think I definitely learned was appreciation for both my family and my community. I know I might not ever have a time like this where my husband and I and our two grown children are all under one roof for such a concentrated amount of time. All arguments over what takeout to order aside, it was nice to be together. I also no longer want to be a casual member of my community. I want to be more conscientious and appreciative of how I'm spending my money.

I'm a wheelchair user who no longer drives, so online shopping is a blessing as far as convenience and independence go. That having been said, now that things are opening up, I want to patronize my local businesses and let them know how happy I am that they're still here. Rather than hurriedly dropping off my dry cleaning, I want to take notice of the family who owns it and who has struggled to keep it afloat.

As difficult as this year has been, it's also been an opportunity for some of us to stop and slow down and appreciate the people and things we have in our lives. Literally stopping to smell the roses and see things that in our previously busy lives have gone unnoticed and unappreciated.

Okay, now that that's been said, how soon before Coachella is up and running?