**Are we There Yet – On Keeping Going in the Pandemic**

**David Poultney**

Two years ago we were noticing ever more stories about what was termed a “novel coronavirus.” A strange new flu like disease emerging in Wuhan and spreading first across China and then further afield. I remember about this time in 2020 I had to go to Sydney for a few days and on both arriving in Sydney and back in Auckland there were screening questions about my recent travel history. Before long travelling between New Zealand and Australia, for citizens of these two countries generally a very easy experience became all but impossible. We found ourselves in that first lockdown, we seemed engaged in this huge national effort which perhaps we thought would see us through it. We were keeping apart now so we could be together later, soon; and so we were for a while. Now we are not under the illusion that this is about to pass, indeed the longer it goes on the harder it is to see when it might be over or what it might look like. Perhaps this is just too hard and I wonder if the choice of some jurisdictions to basically end all compulsory infection control measures is because there are votes in pretending this is over

In a recent telephone appointment with my GP she said she thought it might be five years. At that point I was too disconsolate to ask her to explain why she thought that.

To paraphrase Churchill are we at the end of the beginning or the beginning of the end?

Be it five years or – hopefully – less time that that how can we live well in challenging and uncertain circumstances. Much of life is about waiting, how do we live in such waiting times?

**1.** **Focus on what you have and celebrate every little thing** We may quite legitimately feel like we are missing out on things we might like to do, people we want to see, places we want to visit. We can get stuck by regret over these and feel aggrieved by them. Yet it is important to focus on positives and on the things even in this time of limits which nurture hope and a sense of joy and fulfilment.

**2.** **Stay connected with yourself first and then with friends and family**

We have at times found ourselves in our small bubbles. For some of us this has been very hard. Yet we can use such times to know yourself and reflect. Building a relationship with oneself is as important as building it with others. Also, be in touch with your friends and family members to motivate them, lift their spirits, and alleviate their mood, which eventually brings you joy. It can bring a sense of togetherness and strengthen our bonds.

**3.** **Find yourself and get motivated**

Spend enough time with yourself, be honest with yourself, forgive yourself and discover what really motivates you. Let go of things that hold you in sadness, rediscover your happiness and bloom with grace.

It is comparatively easy at the beginning of things, even things like this. We start purposefully, we start engaged with the challenge of it all. When finally this ends we shall breathe this collective huge sigh of relief. The challenge though is keeping engaged, purposeful, hopeful in the middle. I hope these three simply measures help. David Poultney