

Taking Pause in Trying Times

In the harsh winter of 1776, Thomas Paine wrote the following words to encourage the troops of the American Revolution: “These are the times that try men’s souls: The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.” Throughout history, freedom is won when people and nations pull together and persist through adversity.

You have worked so long and hard to build a life and career, and now much of it is challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a great deal of uncertainty as to how things will unfold. At these times, we need to pause, take stock and take an emotional deep breath, such that we respond and not react. This enables us to adapt to the rapidly changing daily circumstances of our lives and our world.

This health crisis has been likened to a war, which is apt. This is a war on our way of being. Now, some may think it is our just deserts for not having adhered to some belief or other. That is simply untrue. Life happens, and significant challenges arise which are truly nothing personal. It is just how things are.

If this is a war, then the words of Abraham Lincoln may serve: “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.”

There are two separate causes here. The first is the safety and welfare of yourself, your family, employees, colleagues, friends and neighbors. That is job number one, and it needs to be addressed wholeheartedly. It is imperative that we follow the guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as the mandates of our state and local governments.

The second cause is to take Lincoln’s words and turn them into better action. There are always opportunities in crises, but first our stark emotions have to be managed. The fear, anxiety and uncertainty are the naysayers of our souls. These are the times when we need to come together, as individuals and groups, to plan the way forward. We do this not with fear, but with purposeful plans and actions. Lincoln’s words were not just about the United States, but the world in which we live in totality. Stop and think, respond and not react, adapt and adjust, learn and do. Always respect your talents.

Know that I am here for you and always ready for a chat.

My wish for you and yours is health, safety and strength in the days ahead.

George E. Gercken