

# *From the Desk of Dr Jenn Hardy*

A quarterly-ish newsletter



## Hello!

I know this edition of the newsletter is coming to you earlier than expected. Even so, I wanted to send each of you a newsletter to go along with my most recent course launch. In a year where everything feels so out of whack, I can't quite figure out if I am ahead of schedule or behind schedule. We'll split the difference and say that I'm right on time. ;)

As I thought about topics I could talk about today, so many came to mind. There were emotionally easier topics that part of me wanted to stick to. But still, there was this other part of me that knew I would just be avoiding the obvious.

And so, this newsletter is dedicated to the months that lay ahead in this pandemic. I don't claim to have all of the answers. Here's just what I've figure out so far.

*@drjennhardy*

## Looking back on where we've been.

Do you remember where you were when you found out that your country was entering into a national state of emergency? I remember where I was. I was driving our family car down to Florida for a spring break vacation while my husband was reading news updates on his phone. It didn't feel real at the time. Everything around us felt exactly the same as it had the day before. Crises are disorienting. They confuse us and knock us off of our natural equilibrium.

My family and I did our best to create a socially distanced vacation on the fly (lots of hand sanitizer, eating in our rental, and canceling plans). Driving home, we didn't even need to hit the brakes once in Atlanta traffic. It was shocking and eerie all at once. It felt like the entire country must have shut down. It did.

There were those of us who hunkered down, planning on a quiet few weeks at home to allow the crisis to pass over us. There were others who refused to believe what the rest of us did. They kept going as if nothing was different. Regardless of what you think now, I expect that we can all appreciate that change will happen whether we want it to or not. Pretending everything is still the same doesn't make it so.

After that, we all worked to figure out how to stay safe. We worked to find our routines and keep afloat. We had so much relearning to do. Whether it was getting groceries or spending time with friends, everything seemed to have a new set of rules. In the end, all of this change exhausted us.

Amidst this very real stress was another: the disconnect we often felt between our perceptions of reality and the perceptions of the people around us. Everything was somehow a political statement. There was a lot of "us" and "them" thinking. It's hard enough to go through a crisis. It's even harder when you feel isolated from your community...when you feel a muted hostility between you and them.

I realize it can feel really hard to look back, especially as our situation continues to be difficult. And still, looking back offers us an important set of opportunities:

1. Look at how far you've come. You've come so far. What was once effortful is beginning to feel more automatic. (If you are like me, you are much more likely to remember your mask now than in April.)
2. I hope you are also able to look back at that version of you with a lens of compassion. You were expected to figure out everything all at once. No wonder you weren't showing up as your best self all the time. No wonder you were so tired.
3. In this shake up, you have likely come to understand the parts of your life you miss the most and will make sure return. You have also likely come to understand the parts of your life you won't have returning once everything gets back to "normal."

## Looking ahead to 2021.

If I've learned one thing from March 2020, it's this: things tend to take longer than you think they should. Don't worry, I've learned a lot more lessons than just this one. But still, I find my mind returning to this idea a lot recently.

You see, I'm encouraged by the news of a vaccine. I'm also wisened to the scale of the world. There are so, so many human beings walking around on Earth...and Earth is so, so big. Just as COVID-19 didn't quite hit the county I call home to any large degree until sometime mid-summer, I expect the vaccine will not be here as quickly as I would like it to be.

And so, I'm learning to accept that my own impatience creates a stress I can't afford. I'm settling into the idea of conservative estimates. Rather than hoping for a quick return to concerts and spring festivals, I'm encouraging myself to focus on what is in my control. For me, part of this way of coping is to do something. If I just sit here waiting, it will be a long, lonely few months.

Here are some ways that I plan to spend my winter:

1. Sleeping in whenever I can, because I'm still so tired from 2020.
2. Creating some new family traditions around the holidays. We are watching classic Christmas movies that my kids are now old enough to enjoy.
3. Writing for fun, not just work. Maybe someday I will share some of it with you.
4. Reading A LOT of books.
5. Playing Dr. Mario. We never had the game growing up but have an old Nintendo now. Not everything needs to be productive!
6. Going outside to enjoy the sunshine and warmer weather when it comes.
7. Giving my husband and kids lots of hugs.
8. Calling my parents as much as I can.
9. Making homemade batches of Chex mix.
10. Encouraging my kids (and myself) to hold onto the dialectic that we can feel both grief and gratitude at the same time, that one doesn't cancel out the other.

I hope that you are being intentional about these months. Whether we like it or not, 2020 and 2021 will stand out in our memories. Let's try to find some meaning in the mess and the stress.

