

Managing social withdrawal

I remember when I had the measles and the mumps. Apart from the discomfort, what glorious times those were to be liberated from school and to be pampered with breakfast and lunch in bed and to lie around reading up on the latest exploits of Superman and the Green Hornet. Big Little books and comics were my comfort food as I gradually regained my health. I confess to a little malingering, wanting to draw out the time I could be sidelined from the nuns' taskings. Eventually, I had to fess up and when asked "How are you feeling today, my son?," I could no longer feign a near death condition.

Gone were the telltale spots and fever. I was given my papers and told to rejoin the ranks of the living and resume my studies. I was happy to see my classmates again and I remember thinking that life wasn't so bad after all. There was always recess to look forward to. As a matter of fact, that's one of the secrets of survival -- having something to look forward to -- and while I didn't know it then, I sure do now after being forced to self-exile due to the Coronavirus. I suspect you're feeling the same as you go about your daily routines. This much solitude can do strange things to a person, though.

As I vegetate in front of the television most mornings I find myself looking out both hemispheres of my bifocals at the same time. I hear what the President and Vice-President and their band of scientists and administrators on the Coronavirus Task Force (CTF) are saying, and I can even listen to what New York's Governor, Cuomo is saying for at least ten minutes now before my ears start shutting down and my eyes start glazing over. Believe me, THAT'S progress. Unfortunately, my mind starts wandering after those ten minutes are over and I'm drawn to the sign language person (SLP) behind the podium or in the little picture on the screen who is wildly gesturing and grimacing simultaneously as if the words are controlling them and not the other way around.

I'm hooked. I tune out Cuomo and concentrate on the SLP. What a treat! While I can't quite understand anything that's being said, I'm locked in a state of utter fascination at their energy. Then I remember back to 2013 when a phony SLP stepped up and interpreted Barack Obama's eulogy of Nelson Mandela in Johannesburg, South Africa. Then there was the fake SLP that spoke in gibberish in Tampa, FL at a police press conference in 2017. The mind is a strange thing, indeed, and mine was working in overtime, so I came up with a new game to amuse myself. I would turn off the sound and only watch the pictures on the TV for a day.

Turns out this was very entertaining. One of my favorite things quickly became viewing all the inane commercials that populate the Fox News Channel and trying to analyze the body language of the spokespeople. This was a snap because Fox runs these commercials ad nauseam - in almost an endless loop - and if I missed something I could be sure of seeing it again within the hour. The biggies are all the pharmaceutical sellers that hawk products offering to cure everything from erectile dysfunction to hair loss (and everything in between those two points). One of my favorites, though, is the 'My Pillow' guy, Mike Lindell. A born pitchman, Lindell holds his pillow as if he was cradling a new-born baby and caresses it as if it was an injured puppy, all the while smiling his ultra-sincere salesman's smile and being sure to let the crucifix around his neck drop into camera view.

Sitting on his 'My Pillow Mattress Topper' his hands chop up and down for emphasis (I don't know what words this action would be interpreted as in sign language, but it is energized). I'm mesmerized. His passion for his pillows and other assorted sleep products is as infectious as the Covid-19. Then the camera shifts to the figure of a lady lying on her side with her back towards the camera. (This is my favorite part.) A perfect hourglass figure in repose, so perfect in fact that I'm reaching for my credit card. Fortunately for me, Lindell's back, chopping away with his hands, walking backwards and motioning to his factory of busy worker bees. Then it's over, except for the TV promotional code and another shot of happy Mike.

Trying to recover, I unmute the TV only to see William Devane step out from underneath either a battleship's guns or an old oak tree. He tells me that America will soon choose a new leader, either a Republican, Democrat or Independent and that he is going to do his part. He will vote... and then buy gold (to basically hedge against whichever idiot is elected). Yessir, Devane is a true American, patriotic and skeptical... and more than a smidgeon paranoid. But aren't we all these days? Especially those of us who've seen how our leaders in Washington are acting?

At this point, I'm sorely tempted to let the Democrats have it, right between the eyes, as they dither and dally and insist on adding non-essential funding to a very essential Coronavirus Relief Bill. While I'm all for supporting our great American cultural offerings, I really don't think the Kennedy Center or National Public Radio need a special carve-out in a bill that is designed to help America's wage-earners keep their heads above water. But that's just me.

If we all remain in our forced seclusion in our haciendas for much longer I'm afraid that there is a real and present danger, and that danger is that we might actually wake up and get angry enough to throw every elected official out of office in November. There is a solution, however, and that is to write in the 'My Pillow guy's' name on the ballot...for every office. Goodness knows; we could do a lot worse.

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