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Consider Humanity

There is no arguing that the entire way that America’s society functions, along with all other countries affected, has been turned upside down since the rapid explosion of the coronavirus pandemic. Information about the disease has taken over the media in all forms, to the point that it is all we hear and see every day. The virus has worked its way into the education system, shutting down schools of every level, but also becoming a classroom discussion topic. The students in my own English class wrote of their experiences with this pandemic in regard to how it has drastically shifted their lives. Emily Taylor and Kaleigh Ward, students from my class, have been sent home from their school at UNE, and both have families making numerous sacrifices. This is not the first time a disease has sent people home from college and essentially shut down a country: the 1918 flu pandemic gave rise to an opportunity for many, including Dr. Frank Biberstein, to sacrifice their education and health to help others. In a time of global crisis, many people have become the best versions of themselves, embodying compassion and doing all they can, even if small to help this virus go away, however, some people are still selfish and are refusing to follow government suggestions, potentially making all other people’s sacrifices a waste.

Panicking during a time like this may be instinctual, but the essential workers of our society must push these feelings aside to help others. For these people, being considerate means making large sacrifices. Aside from being some of the only people being required to still go to their jobs, health care providers are risking their lives and the lives of their families to help those suffering from this disease. Because of the intense panic in the country, some of these providers are going to work without the proper personal protective equipment, because mass hysteria has caused regular citizens to buy up masks and gloves. As an EMT myself, I know of departments that go through hundreds of masks a week and may be unable to protect themselves on future calls. When talking about her own family’s experience with this, Emily Taylor wrote, “My mom works in the lab of the hospital, drawing patients’ blood. On multiple occasions, they had to ask patients to leave who came in with symptoms of the virus, and my mom was left wondering whether she was exposed and was going to be spreading it to her family when she came home” (Taylor). Taylor’s mother lives in a constant state of unsurety, not wanting to affect her loved ones, but never knowing if her patients are carriers of the virus. People are so scared of having this virus that they want to be tested but put at risk those who have to do the testing. Taylor’s whole family could be affected at any time from her mother coming in contact with the disease, but yet she still goes to work every day to help the sick. This is being considerate. It’s not that Taylor’s mother doesn’t care if she gets her loved ones sick, it’s that she is putting strangers’ safety, health, and happiness, before her own.

One does not have to risk their life in order to be considerate. Not everyone even has the opportunity to do so if they would. At a time like this, simply following the CDC’s guidelines and reducing contact with others is enough. For many people, being considerate looks like not seeing their friends, in Emily Taylor’s case, losing their job when towns shut down, or finishing their semester of schooling online. In 1918, a similar pandemic spread around the world, quarantining many and pausing events and education. A college freshman, like myself, named Frank Biberstein was absolutely considerate in the sacrifices he made, “[He] would walk with a horse–drawn cart down the streets collecting the dead… he and a couple other seminarians… would take turns going into the homes to collect the bodies. Once they retrieved a few bodies, they would return to a makeshift field hospital” (Kendall). While these college freshmen made these seemingly incomprehensible sacrifices, there are people making sacrifices to their own lives today, while small in comparison, still important. Kaleigh Ward shares smaller sacrifices she has observed others make, “My friends have given up things as well, such as their high school or college graduations. They have given up vacations, sports, birthdays, and time with others. We have all sacrificed a lot, but I am proud to say that all of us are doing it for the greater good” (Ward). We don’t have to be cleaning the dead of the streets to help prevent the spread of disease. Practicing basic hygiene and staying away from people as much as possible can do so much. It isn’t easy to be alone; I understand that, but that is what being considerate and compassionate requires right now.

Despite the lack of energy required to be considerate for most people, there are still several who are not willing to sacrifice the small things, and in turn are likely to make everyone else’s sacrifices all for naught. Those who feel they do not need to quarantine themselves extend the needed quarantine, and selfishly put the lives of health care providers at a higher risk. Kaleigh Ward explains her own experience with this, “Unfortunately, there are some families who have just returned home from trips and Europe and refused to quarantine themselves, in fact one of them had recently made a joke about the two-week quarantine” (Ward). It is unfair and foolish for people to neglect taking this pandemic seriously. Millions are dying around the world, and despite the information on the news, this is not only relevant to the elderly in our society. Not only can young people get this disease, they can be carriers without even knowing it. Using an excuse to break quarantine and making jokes about the severity of this pandemic are dangerous. These people need to consider more than just themselves. No one is asking them to sacrifice their lives, but these are the people who are spreading their germs because isolating themselves is too boring. They need to step back and not just consider themselves and those close to them, but consider humanity as a whole, for they likely don’t even know how many people are actually dying from this.

The meaning of consideration is evolving, and quickly becoming more applicable to the lives of everyone as the coronavirus pandemic spreads across the country. Being considerate is requires sacrifices and is obvious in the lives of health care providers, who risk their lives on a daily basis, but during this panic, everyone can be considerate. A kind word, patient response, or a simple smile from six feet away is considerate of those who are highly stressed. With more and more opportunity to consider others, I have seen so much kindness and gratefulness, but unfortunately, some continue to be selfish. I hope that after the pandemic ends, everyone will consider what they have learned about themselves and others and use that to make themselves a better person.

Citations:

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