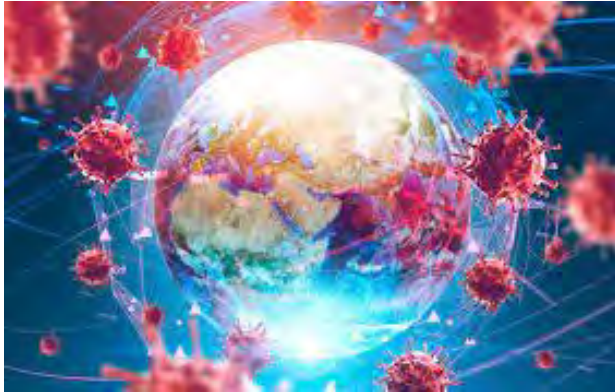


## COVID Global Crisis: Moving Forward or Backward is Your Choice

Cheryl Roth  
July 24, 2021



I had an interesting conversation with a friend today, over the phone because we can't meet in person. She was a bit discouraged due to the [COVID global crisis](#) and current lockdown we are experiencing. We are unable to travel beyond our local area, unable to see friends or go shopping for anything beyond the basics, and her work has been severely reduced. Until recently we've been fairly safe and could live "normally", so our outlook was hopeful. But the Delta variant has suddenly changed the picture.

Since we are both expats, we could console each other about missing family on the other side of the world. When life is so uncertain that you can't even make plans it's easy to get sucked into doom and gloom.

### **The media's influence on our minds**

She talked about the news and certain documentaries she had recently watched that painted a bleak future for humanity. She also mentioned that lack of work gave her too much time to contemplate (and Google) negative information. I'm sure many people can relate to this as we are all facing the pandemic and it's details dominate the media.

It reminded me of the overwhelming messages I faced growing up during the [Vietnam War](#) and [Cold War](#) era. Although we didn't have the internet, television and radio news painted a bleak picture daily. Newspapers and magazines were full of equally horrific images and frightening information. Bomb scare drills in school were more common than fire drills, and neighborhood friends had bomb shelters in their back yard. Then there were "Brown Outs" and "Black Outs" to prevent the enemy from detecting where to launch their bombs. Communism was the global crisis I grew up with. Yes, the world can look like a scary place.

I reminded my friend that the news is always sensational. No matter how much truth it contains, it can't tell us what's still unknown or undisclosed. It's meant to be alarmist and there is so much information on the internet now that it's overwhelming. All types of media are trying to sell you something - an idea, a viewpoint, a subscription or a product. But only you can choose what you buy, how you buy it, and how you use it - and that includes information.

**There have always been world crisis and going back is not an option**

Today we might find ourselves wishing that things would "get back to normal." But what is normal? Human beings always face crisis, and through crisis we examine who we are and what we believe, and how to move forward. There's never been a perfect time in history. Even if there was, there's no way to go back, although we love to fanaticize about that. Our task is to find our way forward by solving the current problems.

This is hard during a pandemic, as it's a complex global health crisis that affects our immediate personal way of life. Solutions are in the hands of governments and systems way beyond our control. We naturally revert to survival mode with our fear sensors on high alert. Some of this behavior is reasonable, but we can easily spiral out of control and jump to irrational or unhelpful conclusions.

I told my friend that there are three basic ways we can relate to our circumstances: 1.) Get into the fear and alarmist mentality absorbing all of the negative information and allowing it to destroy our hope and outlook for the future, 2.) Put our heads in the sand and ignore the reality, or 3.) Stay calm and focused on the positive possibilities while managing the current crisis on a personal and local level. I think it's obvious which choice would have the best outcome for anyone's mental and physical health.

### **You don't have to like the lockdown but it can still be useful**

I shared with my friend that I'm not enjoying lockdown because I easily go stir crazy. I like to be going places and doing things, seeing loved ones and accomplishing goals. We had a bit of a laugh about how even paradise can feel like a prison when you don't have the freedom to enjoy it. (We live near the beach Northeast of Sydney, Australia)

But I told her that I know there are many positive and productive things I can do with my time at home and that's the best I can do right now. I stay aware of the local and global situation but I don't let it affect my outlook because it helps no one (including myself) if I get depressed. It takes a bit of internal work to reframe our expectations of life in a positive way, but it's an essential skill for lasting happiness.

### **Making the small picture count**

Instead of raging and complaining about a global crisis I can't control I look for what I can do that's productive, helpful or joyful in this moment. I remind myself that on a global level there are possibilities that we are not aware of yet. From our tiny individual viewpoint we are not seeing the whole picture, but we can still do something useful and valuable. So I ask myself, "In this moment where I am right now what shall I do that's joyful and loving and helps me feel a sense of peace and contentment?"

In these difficult times small things have become more significant. A phone conversation, greeting a stranger with a smile even through a mask, sending an email or text to check on friends, house cleaning and preparing healthy meals. I've taken on projects and hobbies that I didn't have time for before. But most of all, I'm reconsidering my priorities in life and asking myself, "Do I want things to go back to the way they were?" I'm hoping that historically we'll be able to look back on the pandemic as a time when humanity evolved in a valuable way.

During our conversation my friend had a sudden realization that she was consuming too much negative media and that there were more positive things she could do with her time. She apologized for being so negative but I told her there was no need, I often have to remind myself to [focus on the positive](#) too.

Although I couldn't see her face, I could feel the smile in her voice as we said goodbye. And I smiled too.