

The Corona Virus in South Korea - Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome

Michael Downey
April 4, 2020



Three months ago, when I first heard of the corona virus, I thought it was just a cute sounding blurb with no lasting impact. Now I see that it is an unique event with a world wide impact. In a lot of ways people have gone crazy with panic. Who to blame? Seems, it is a natural reaction to want to blame someone. As I see it, there is no one to blame. It just happened and how it is going to effect individuals, families, society, and nations is mostly random.

Wear a mask, wash your hands, and stay home is the only advice that is being touted. Even if you do all these things you might catch it and if you do all of them you might not be infected. If you get it, it might be a mild case or it might be severe. If you have pre-existing health problems you might die, or you might not. If you pray hard you might avoid it, or you might not. Seems awful random to me. This uncertainty is what makes folks panic and start acting irrationally . Who would have ever thought that folks would start hoarding toilet paper.

The impact of this virus, whether you think it is over blown or not, is going to be big. And so what is to be done? Back in January I figured I would just wait it out. By March it became increasingly evident that waiting it out was not going to work. My bottom line was going south fast and I was forced to admit that things were not going back to normal anytime soon, if ever. Improvise, adapt and overcome was my only option. I've always been an

'in your face' kinda guy and have resisted on-line teaching and lecturing. Now there is no choice and I'm moving, like an old dinosaur, into the 21st century.

I'm pushing hard on the transition to an on-line business model. Again, it strikes me that the future is not ours to see. Those who are unable to adapt to changing circumstances are destined to slowly pass away. I will continue to move forward. So far, the lessons on Skype that I've done have worked well with few problems. Advertising, scheduling, and technical issues such as lighting and manipulating the Skype session so I can use multimedia are things that I am learning.

Here in South Korea, they have decided to open the schools after a long delay. In most cases the students will not be going to their classrooms but have been ordered to take lessons on-line. This has, of course, thrown teachers, parents, and some students in to a mad scramble to produce, supervise, and master the technology of on-line learning. It's a brave new world and some are eagerly embracing it while others are quaking a bit.

Last week I had my first Skype session with a refugee from North Korea. She risked her life to flee the tyranny in her birth place, survived in China while mastering the language, and is now a graduate student in South Korea. Yet she was very uncomfortable with studying on-line. She mentioned that she wasn't a 'techy' and would rather meet in person. Lots of folks will shy away from the new technology but in my opinion it's better to charge forward.

Since then I've been filling my Skype dance card with elementary and middle school students. In the beginning, everything was new and I was less than confident. Feeling quite anxious, I decided that it was best to just jump off the cliff and try to find my wings on the way down. I told myself that it was better to start and do it badly at first than not to start at all. So far, I'm learning as I go and it seems to be going pretty well.

Where all this will end up is anyone's guess; and there is no shortage of folks guessing and playing the blame game. As for me, I will learn what I can from the corona and move into the future.