

## Hello U3A Members!



How is everything going during this period of 'retreat'?

Often I've moaned about having too much to do and wishing that I had more quiet time to; organize my thoughts, read, write and be more productive around the house. Now that time is here but I felt a strong sense of resistance at first. However, as the weeks roll on I'm starting to be more at ease with my emotions and beginning to reshape my thinking.

A retreat is a gift of time to get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and to be in a place where we feel serene. It's a time of reflection and restoration where profound healing can take place. My hope is that you are safe and well and able to adapt to the changing times by finding a few silver linings in the autumn clouds.

Last week I discussed five very basic suggestions for good health including: *Movement, Meditation, Breath Control, Vibrant Foods and Quality Sleep*. In this letter we'll explore a few other ideas that can help you to find a sense of contentment, purpose and meaning during unsettling times.

### 1. Personal Growth

All life is constantly evolving and so must we. As we age our physicality may slow but we can still be in a state of creation and exploration. There are limitless ways in which we can grow as individuals.

Firstly, we can make the most out of opportunities and use our time to learn a new skill or expand our knowledge about the things that make us curious. U3A provide many options for personal growth and getting to know new people. In addition: check out Ted Talks on YouTube, read sacred texts, listen to informative podcasts or write down your aspirations.

Here are some questions that will get the gears moving:

- What's something I want to learn more about?
- What's a skill I'd like to gain?
- What do I need to illuminate in my life? (Creativity? Relationships? Healthy habits? Nature? Gratitude?)

## **2. Contribution**

Being of service to others is good for them and good for you! It's in our nature to look after each other and helping others makes us feel useful. Contribution gives us a sense of purpose and adds meaning to our lives. It can be as simple as making a phone call, sending a letter, donating essential items or cooking a casserole for someone. Random acts of kindness are expressions of love with far reaching ripple effects.

Right now, in our community, the volunteers at CareWorks Sunranges, are working extra hard to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our area have food and toiletries. Please remember them as financial difficulties worsen for many with the current employment chaos. Worrying about how to feed the family is a hardship that no one should suffer. Donations of non perishables can be left at the CareWorks office, 34 Macedon St, Sunbury.

Perhaps you have other information about ways in which we can all look after our community members during this challenging period? If so, please share your ideas with the U3A committee.

## **3. Nature**

Nature is healing and we need to breathe it in deeply whenever we get the chance! Doesn't a walk in the fresh air always make you feel better? The; sun, trees, grass, sky, flowers, creeks and hills all contain a powerful energy that restores your body and fills your soul with beauty. Please don't underestimate how important it is to get outside and soak in the divine goodness of Mamma Nature!

## **4. Complete A Personal Project**

We need to keep our minds and hands busy right now! Do you have a project that is begging for your attention? Sorting out family photos (or making a memory book online), planting a veggie patch, de-cluttering the house, writing your memoir, memorizing a song or poem, typing up your most loved recipes, revarnishing outdoor furniture .... ponder your ideas and get cracking on that undertaking that will bring you pleasure once it's complete! You may be able to link this project in with your Personal Growth plans. Do what feels right and do it for YOU!

## 5. Relationships

This global crisis has made one thing crystal clear ... love is wealth! In the blink of an eye we have lost the freedom to hug, kiss and cuddle the ones we cherish. Shaking hands is taboo and group celebrations are off the agenda for a while. We've lost the ability to travel and be with our friends and family so our social structure has been sadly remodelled, just for now.

Very quickly we've learned just how precious strong relationships are. We may be in a state of lockdown but we can amplify our love in a thousand creative ways. Reach out to those you care about and especially remember the folks who are likely to be lonely.

Even if you live with others, you'll be understandably missing people you want to be near. Thank goodness for modern communication via many different platforms!

One of my Personal Projects is to hand write letters and cards to many of my friends and family just to tell them how much I treasure them. I'm letting each person know what makes them so special and how they have impacted my life in a beautiful way. For me, getting something in the mailbox while in isolation is exciting! Is that true for you?

However you decide to shine the love, the key point is to nurture gratitude in your heart for each and every person that we share this glorious planet with.

*Namaste* means, *I see the light in you and I bow to you. The divine in me honours the divine in you.* In essence, the salutation, *Namaste*, recognizes that we are all equal and passes a positive energy to the one receiving the gesture.

From my home to yours, *Namaste* my friends. Keep shining your unique light!

In peace and health,

*Joni Coots*

