



I focus

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'Social distancing': This pain has existed forever

I can only imagine the pain and suffering that so many people are experiencing as one public health directive after another exhorts for social distancing. The need to be together is evident in the recurring appeals from the health authorities and politicians 'to stay away' from each other. Some resist and some persist because being together is *sine qua non* to human nature. Lately, government has also taken the unprecedented move to invoke the police force to disperse groups of four or more people. This is evidence of the need for people to be with each other, which at times outweighs the fear of the noxious virus.

People are essentially designed to be with each other, to hang on to each other whether in times of agony or ease. We want to share if the weather is bothering us or if it's the kids who are tiring us out. We need to talk and we need to be listened to. We need to touch and be touched.

It is fascinating that even though the economic model we embrace has endeavored to distance us, we have maintained an entrenched need to hang on dearly to one another. Maybe it is our survival instinct, who knows?

Covid-19 (closing in on 1 million affected persons globally) has killed so many people around the world and almost everything and everywhere has grinded to a halt. Notwithstanding, it has not taken away our desire to be with others – it has in fact worked the other way round!

So many are suffering as we speak because of imposed social isolation, due to partial or complete lockdown. The fear of the unknown exceeds all other forms of distress. Only God knows how many people out there are struggling with anxiety because they don't know how this whole matter will pan out.

On the other hand, many have been experiencing this imposed social distancing for way too long and yes right under our noses – and yet we have just snubbed these individuals.

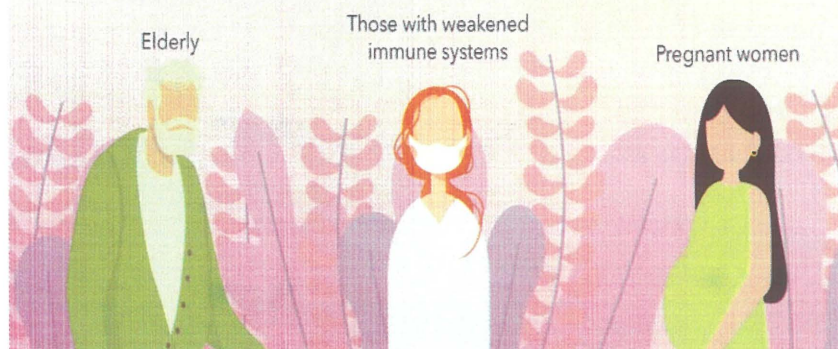
- All those inmates, who out of fault of their own, very true, have a long sentence to see through away from their families, their children, their parents, the people they love, their hobbies and their passions.

- All those detainees who are subjected to inhumane sentenc-

SOCIAL DISTANCING

IT MAY NOT BE FOR YOU, BUT IT IS FOR EVERYONE.

COVID-19 HIGH RISK CATEGORIES:



ing, placing them in solitary confinement (a legalized breach of fundamental human rights) and who have to contend with this terrible pain.

- All those elderly persons expediently 'deposited' into care homes by their relatives even though they might have enough resources to keep living in their towns and villages notwithstanding their ailments.

- All those who have lost someone they love through the egoistic acts of criminals or the undisciplined behavior of others, for example, through excessive or ill-disciplined driving.

- All those who work side-by-side with us, who possibly share offices but struggle because they do not feel they are part of the group and day-in and day-out have to suffer the brunt of feeling alone, whilst people overlook the isolation they are going through.

- All those children (it's not the case with all of them) who have been placed in care homes and were not allowed to be adopted by new families because their 'relations' do not want to let go of their allowances and controls.

- All those children and adolescents who have been abused by their kith and kin, family friends, neighbors, coaches, clergy or religious persons and have to carry the brunt of this pain and shame.

- All those who struggle with

mental health issues and cannot speak their thoughts and fears clearly and coherently, and their contemplations echo in their minds.

- All those who still need to 'come out' and are fearful that once they declare their sexuality they will be ostracized by their families and friends, fearing that their differences will not be accepted.

- All those artists and poets who would like to share their passion, but are fearful that their work will be rubbished and that they will be criticized and laughed at

- All those who need to make important decisions for themselves and others, those leaders who are at the top of the pyramid in the decision making processes, and very often in the dire moments are not understood well enough.

- All those who are bereaving pets they loved as if they were their children, brothers or sisters. The pain that is brought about by this angst is immense and many a times is not understood by people who have not embraced such companions in their lives.

- All those who, out of choice or possibly not, are working away from our country, away from their families and loved ones.

- All those who have travelled through so much danger, desperation, desert and rough seas to

try and make a life for themselves, but as a consequence cannot see those whom they loved so passionately.

- All those who need to travel because they need to undergo treatment abroad and leave without the people they hold dear.

- All those who contemplate suicide, some who try and others who succeed. Who knows how big that pain of not being able to communicate their feelings with others is?

- All those thousands of people, almost 150,000 individuals, who before all of this mayhem were already victims of loneliness, with no one to share their sadness and happiness with.

- All those autistic persons who live a life of hardly ever being understood, yet what we do is create all possible mechanisms to try and make them like US, understand OUR language and go by OUR rules.

- All those (women in particular) who suffer from the violent acts of their partners and have to live in silence and solitude because of the fear of retribution.

- All those children who have been placed in care, sometimes not even understanding why this has happened in the first place and why, out of no fault of their own, they are pulled out of their families and neighborhoods.

- All those activists, whether on

topics like pro-life or other non-popular issues who are detested, hated, abused and disliked because the issues they are putting to the fore might not be the most popular.

- All those women who are passionate about their careers but have to stick to the limited choices that a misogynist and patriarchal society throws at them.

- All those who are suffering because of marriages and relationships that are coming apart.

- All those disabled persons who have no friends, no companions, no one to have relationships, sex and someone to share their life with.

- All those who are running a business and are still starting off and can only keep in the nervousness and anxiety because they do not want to burden their families.

- All those in the caring professions, who day-in and day-out carry the suffering of other people who seek help.

- All those who have been diagnosed with cancer or are undergoing treatment, or maybe their family and those who are in hospice waiting for that dreaded moment of having to let go.

- All those priests, religious people and those dedicated to celibacy (the good ones) who in their interest and love for others give up what is most important in life, closeness to others - to serve.

- All those who lost their partners or children in untimely deaths.

- All those men and women who are already 'fathers and mothers' in their heart of hearts but are unable to have children and the pain they have to contend with as they struggle with peoples' jabber and chinwag who think they have the right to judge others.

These people are alone and have been so for more days than the Covid-19 has been on this Island. All the above have been seized by the contrition of social distancing way before we got to know about Covid-19 - a massive pain they've had to match up to.

But who knows.

Maybe Covid-19 is an excellent opportunity to think about all those we've had around us and we can decide to undo the social distancing we forced on them. Maybe now we have a teeny-weeny bit of understanding of how these persons are feeling. It's up to us, at this point, to reach out!