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COVID-19

When was the last time you were able to have a drink with friends? Do you remember the last time you went out to eat? Are we ever going back to normal? These are questions that people now wonder on a daily basis. I still remember when I first heard about COVID-19 and all I could think about was: “I hope China recovers from this.” The thought of it coming near us never crossed my mind. As selfishly as it sounds, I didn’t bat an eye at how lethal this disease is. I didn’t seem to care about it since it was so far away. Now, it’s affecting my family members in Europe. It’s stopping me from visiting them and making sure they’re alright even though there isn’t much I can do. Among all the anxiety, stress and depression over the virus, I’ve collected some optimistic sources that may relieve our fear.

Before I start with the nitty-gritty, we need to go back to 2015. The great Bill Gates had a TED talk specifically about the “next outbreak”. He predicted that the upcoming pandemic will be harsh and we’re not ready for it. We are living through a historic moment that we, in fact, were not ready for. I’m not blaming experts for not looking into what Gates said, but I am pointing fingers at them because our truest form of prediction came from China. We saw the

struggle that they went through—and are still going through—yet we did nothing to prepare. Gates makes a rational point about the investments on preventing nuclear wars. We spent a fortune on it that we lost sight of what's even more dangerous. Microbes. It's microscopical but it can kill millions. The epidemic in west Africa was merely a wake-up call, as Gates warned. Although the Ebola virus only stayed in three countries, it caused a great deal of damage. Thousands of people died, and they couldn't get help immediately. Even after that, why didn't we assemble anything to help us in the future? I doubt there's a prevention to an epidemic or a pandemic, and I'm not an expert, but we are in 2020. There must be something they can do. The most horrendous pandemic people witnessed was the Spanish Flu. Millions died from it and it spread quickly. Similarly, the Coronavirus keeps spreading and it's partially our fault for not following directions. This is one of those rare kinds where the virus stays in your system without any symptoms for weeks and yet you are still contagious. That is why Governors, Presidents and Generals have declared quarantine all around the world. In 2001, government officials and journalists played a "germ game". It was a simulation in which the terrorist group Al Qaeda sets off an outbreak of smallpox in US shopping malls. Bill Gates exclaims that this was the last time they simulated something like that, and it ended very badly. In the past, there have been only "war games" which is why officials weren't ready for the unprecedented events in the "germ game". This game promoted the notion that every country should stockpile on vaccines, emergency kits, and so on. Creator of the game, Tara O'Toole says that we must invest in ultra-fast paper diagnostics and new vaccine manufacturing systems that could provide antidotes within months instead of years. In the speech that Gates made, there was a mention of loss of money. 3 trillion dollars. That's how much global wealth will go down if we have a pandemic as

colossal as the flu in 1918. But, rationally, money shouldn't matter. It's the lives that we need to save.

The New York Times brought in an epidemiologist to tell us exactly what will happen now that the virus is here. It took us, Americans, awhile to come to terms that this is a very serious matter. President Trump was in denial of the disease and he even called it a hoax but, as time went by, he realized that he should take drastic steps to keep it from spreading. I believe that if he took precautions earlier, it would not have been this bad. Regardless, New York isn't being safe, protests are happening in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Washington state against the constraint of people. They aren't happy about the quarantine that was enforced upon them. As we know, social distancing is crucial to helping the world heal, but there's always going to be rebels out there. Unless a strict law is enforced, people will do whatever their hearts desired. Because of this, epidemiologist Dr. Michael Levy says that we certainly shouldn't think in terms of weeks but months before we go back to normal. Dr. Ezekiel J. Emanuel is an oncologist and a medical ethicist who specializes in dilemmas as such and together with Dr. Susan Ellenberg they are fighting to figure out the Coronavirus. She is a biostatistician who expressed that the virus is new which means that it's extremely unpredictable. New symptoms emerge with every new patient. In addition, the speculation that it'll die down as summer is right around the corner, may be false. Warmer weather might not affect this deadly virus at all. Another factor is immunity. There are assumptions that even if a person has mild symptoms, they would not be immune to it. So many elements that experts need to consider, it seems infinite. It was well said that we shouldn't have a picture in our heads about "flattening the curve" but rather think of it as a roller coaster. Specialists say that there may be waves of the virus. Unfortunately, the second wave is likely to be worse due to the flu season. This article was written on March 17th and we recently

witnessed China receive a new wave of sudden outbreak of cases. If this was confirmed, who knows what's next? It's unfortunate that China was just coming out of the hole that they were in, businesses were reopening, people were going back to normal. This is what Dr. Levy was talking about. Being under quarantine will also come in waves. The analogy they used in this essay is very true: "Pumping a car's brakes on an icy road. Either doing nothing or slamming on the brakes leads to an accident. So, we pump the brakes — pushing on the brakes, then easing up, and then applying them again — and after three or four times we slow down enough to stop." We see patterns from previous pandemics and epidemics so, with that in mind, we must take the appropriate steps. As of vaccines; we are looking at approximately a year until it is administered. We may be quarantined for up to 18 months if we aren't careful with social distancing and that's looking at it wishfully. Optimistically, professionals are preparing for potential waves in America so hopefully it will be a quick recovery. The only way we can speed up the process and help health care workers and scientists is by staying at home. It's hard to be away from friends and family, but in a crisis, this is all we can do to show them that we care about their wellbeing.

There's something even more unpleasant about being under quarantine. Loneliness. It's hard enough for us, youngsters, but have we thought about the senior citizens? Deborah Johnson Lanholm, caretaker of Helen Palese who is her sister, speaks out about how difficult it's been for both of them. Helen Palese is nonverbal, so her sister does all the talking for her. They'd always go out everywhere together but now it will have to stop. She's too compromised. Both of the sisters will now have to change their whole routine. Lanholm cannot be subjected to any risk and put herself and Palese in jeopardy. We are the only species on the planet who rely on communication and connection. Adults over the age of 60 are targeted by the Coronavirus but the isolation that they're in will take a toll on their mental and physical health. They're the most

susceptible and the most vulnerable out of all of us. In the section “Isolation and Loneliness are Health Problems, too” Cynthia Boyd, a geriatrics specialist expresses her concern about the health risks some of the elders may experience. “Social isolation has been associated with a significantly increased risk of premature mortality from all causes.” The worse part about this is that we can’t do anything about it. Although it’s scary to think about, young adults also suffer from depression and anxiety. Staying at home in a potential toxic household and dangerous environment may lead to suicide in teenagers and young adults. Not being able to get the medication to ease the anxiety people have makes it that much worse. Alicia McHale suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease which is a lung disease that blocks airflow. One of the symptoms of SARS-CoV-2 is difficulty breathing and McHale talked about the anxiety behind it all. She’s scared of leaving her home and has decided that the best way to cope is by isolation. The risks for her are higher. From a public health perspective, a walk in the park or even a picnic is safer as long as there are no crowds. Ideally, the “6 feet apart” rule could help us significantly but, in my opinion, no contact at all is the best as of right now. Even though seniors aren’t too tech savvy we can still communicate with them through Skype or FaceTime to make sure they’re doing just fine. Eric Klinenberg, a sociologist at New York University, closes off by reminding people that staying home doesn’t have to be that bad. Some time to ourselves is a good thing. Work, life and everything in between has come in the way of discovering ourselves, so take this time to learn about what you value and who you are.

Naomi Klein brought into light Milton Friedman, a free-market economist, who spoke about ideas that are lying around. He suggested that during an “actual or perceived” crisis, change is always produced. But what kind of suggestions function in the midst of it? Who should we save? Most of the population believe that the sensible low and middle class should be our

priority, but powerful people focus on building up the inconceivably wealthy 1%. Since the outbreak of Coronavirus, the New York Stock Exchange has plummeted with regards surrounding the fear of the virus. It has been a historical moment. President Donald Trump publicly stated that he takes no responsibility whatsoever about anything that's happening. Months later we saw change and action from him. But this change wasn't all positive. He is "rescuing" and benefiting from the most dangerous businesses at the expense of global warming. Businesses like airlines, cruise lines, and the fossil fuel industry as a whole are the reason we cannot move forward. It's always one step forward and two steps back when it comes to saving the planet. If our president doesn't educate the public about climate change and actively encourage all of us to come together as a nation and help, no one will. As we recently saw the outrage of his suggestion to "inject disinfectants," we know that one of his hobbies is to deceive the innocent people through media. Apologizing afterwards is never on his to-do list. President Trump doesn't care about the Americans that he so-called leads. He tried reassuring people that he met with the top insurance companies and yet they are the ones who make their plans unaffordable but without research people wouldn't be able to acknowledge that. Donald Trump is pushing to suspend the payroll tax but that would bankrupt Social Security which is what all Americans rely on. Everything that is happening in the White House is not a coincidence. It seems as if Trump is plotting to sabotage his own country. This is what I like to call the "perfect storm." The government has issued a quarantine and has closed all businesses and schools. Many of us are being penalized without income since we aren't working. Still, essential workplaces and big business are open for the public and they're the only ones who have a stable job at the moment. But, as other businesses are closed, how would we pay for rent, food and other necessities? "Coronavirus Capitalism" is the perfect way to engulf the issue that is presented.

Politicians are full of greed and have no plans to go out of their way to put their own money on the line to assist the unemployed. Even through all this disaster, there's hope. Klein touched on how we've seen this happen before, the crisis, the panic, the confusion, the oblivion, but in the end, we might see another New Deal. She concludes by offering something very obvious—boost the clean industries and stop investing in the dirty ones. Just weeks before The Intercept released this video of Naomi Klein, government officials denied the ideas that seemed arbitrary and impossible. Now, everything is being considered.

We've now arrived at the most critical of places. "How Will the Coronavirus End?" There are scientific suggestions—three to be exact—as to how it'll all come to an end. Ed Yong wrote an article for The Atlantic about how America isn't ready for the next pandemic. Likewise, Bill Gates also predicted it. The Global Health Security index reported that the United States scored the highest grade-point on preparedness of a pandemic. This hypothetical situation became reality and this country failed to serve us. The most developed country couldn't get ahold of safety and security against SARS-CoV-2. It's not surprising that hospitals are overwhelmed by patients, materials are becoming scarce, and beds are all occupied. The seasonal flu is nothing compared to this sneaky, stealthy disease. A man, Luciano Borio, who was part of the National Security Council, warned the government on January to act immediately to prevent an epidemic, but those warnings were set off and published in The Wall Street Journal. That led America to not act. After all the warning signs and professionals giving advice to the president, nothing was done. In a situation so severe like this one, I can't comprehend the logic in this. It angers me. It is estimated that by the end of the summer there may be 2.2 million Americans dead due to the virus. Hospitals won't be able to save patients who are injured by other causes such as, car accidents, heart attacks, strokes and many more. In "The Next Months" Yong wrote

that there needs to be at least three things done to keep our nation afloat. The first is acquiring supplies for the health care workers. We need to keep doctors healthy so they can help the sick. Without masks, tests, and bedding, hospitals are rendered useless. It has come to the attention that doctors and nurses improvise with masks. Sometimes they reuse them with patients or they make their own at home, which is both extremely risky. The need of tests is the second factor. People with symptoms often can't check themselves because there aren't enough tests to go around. Donald Trump misstated that anybody can get tested but that is false. Thousands if not millions are anxious to find out if it's just a cold or if it's COVID-19. Clearly, one way we can avoid the spread is social distancing. The third and most important rule to save ourselves. The Coronavirus is inconveniently difficult to spot at first, which makes everyone a suspect. Our immune system won't defend us and it makes us susceptible and vulnerable to new viruses. It is said that the normal everyday people need to help the healthcare workers by "flattening the curve" and buy them more time. It is our duty to make their lives easier. With this information, we can now move on to the three conclusive points of how the pandemic can end. The unlikely event that the population will come together in synchrony and altogether stop the spread of it is the first suggestion. Given that some people still believe it's a hoax, this may never happen. Strong believers of social distancing already help the planet, but one person can't change the world. The second suggestion is the scariest. Like previous pandemics, this virus might go through every viable patient and be left with no more options. This is what influenza did. Back then, people were extremely unprepared and unaware of the solutions so all they could do is suffer. But it is the 21st century now, we shouldn't let it get to that extent. The third and final option is a vaccine. The most rational and realistic option. Though it will take months and months to manufacture and we risk long exposure, it will surely save us. Scientists cannot rush

the process; they need to be careful. The vaccine may have side effects, or it may need a chemical boost of some kind. Regardless, it is already in the works. Thinking about the aftermath hasn't crossed our minds. It seems like a long way from now but author of "The Psychology of Pandemics," Steven Taylor says that some people from Wuhan have developed agoraphobia, the fear of public places. That might happen everywhere. It's human nature to be scared. After all, past diseases have scarred us; AIDS, HIV, SARS, and Ebola have all changed how we function in society. The survivors, though, showed signs of PTSD. As more and more viruses and microbes are discovered, we will fall apart as a society. Connections and communications wouldn't be something people need because of the fear of illness. This is why we need a systematic approach to crises. Like a little kid, America must learn from its mistakes. After such a disastrous attempt, we cannot sink lower. We must surge and never let ourselves down again.