We are living amidst a situation many have never seen before. There is pervasive anxiety looming that largely stems from uncertainty. Many of us are thinking... *Is this global pandemic going to affect me and my loved ones? For how long will our lives be disrupted and our regular routines interrupted? Is this a cold, or COVID-19?*

There has already been so much pain and suffering caused by this pandemic, and my heartfelt support and condolences go to those in our global community who have been negatively affected. Against this background, I'm reminded that moving forward, we have all been placed in a very unique position to contemplate our motivations and intentions that guide our behavior.

As a scientist deeply committed to the cultivation of well-being at scale, I'd like to focus on how global challenges can bring out the best in our humanity.

One thing that strikes me as notable is that we are being asked to practice "social distancing" - to stay home and cancel everything. This is a compelling opportunity to recognize that **in addition to minimizing the likelihood of exposure ourselves, social distancing is also an act of generosity and compassion toward others** by eliminating our interactions as a possible vector for viral transmission. **Let that sink in – the primary motivation for social distancing is to benefit others.**

This pandemic also starkly reminds us of our interdependence and how connected we are to one another. **The spread of the virus does not honor national boundaries, religions, socioeconomic status, or racial and ethnic differences.** We can also see very dramatically how events on the opposite side of the world can directly impact our lives in our home towns.

In addition, the events of the past month are **a poignant reminder of impermanence**. Whatever temptation we might have had to think that our lives will always continue in the ways we are accustomed to, we have all been starkly reminded of how everything can change in an instant...

So what can we do beyond social distancing and personal hygiene that our health professionals are recommending? (For staying physically safe, we strongly recommend following updates **here** from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States and the **World Health Organization** outside of the United States.)

- For those of us who are privileged with flexibility at work and in our personal lives, the next time you make the choice to take a meeting by videoconference or to work from home, **take a moment to reflect on this as a compassionate act**, reflecting on how this decision to practice social distancing is at its core for the benefit of others.

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  Become aware of **how extraordinarily interconnected we are**. Both the spread of the virus itself and the choices we make to decrease the likelihood of its spreading underscore our deeply intertwined nature.

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  If you are feeling frustrated or a bit claustrophobic about remaining at home so much of the time, try to remind yourself that the plight of many others is just as, and in some cases, much more challenging. Also, take this as an opportunity to **appreciate the contributions of those around us for all they are doing to help in this crisis**; whether it is practicing social distancing themselves, serving on the front lines of testing and treatment, or delivering food and supplies to those in most critical need.

When we train our lens of awareness on these acts of kindness, we can't help but be moved by the basic goodness that lies at the core of our actions. So even with the stress and anxiety and unprecedented challenges that we are facing with this pandemic, we can be grateful for the many

opportunities to recognize our basic good nature and to extend our self-care to the caring for so many others.

All of us at the Center for Healthy Minds and Healthy Minds Innovations send our deepest wishes for your health, safety and well-being!

With a deep bow of appreciation for all you are doing,

Richard J. Davidson, Founder
Center for Healthy Minds and
Healthy Minds Innovations