

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS FOR THE ISOLATED ESOTERICIST

Seven steps to banish panic and enhance well-being

By Tim Wyatt

Had my grandmother still been alive she would have probably sourly observed, 'The world's going to hell on a handcart.' Although she wasn't the most optimistic soul who's ever been in incarnation, had she been alive in 2020 (unlikely since she'd be 146) she would certainly have had a point. Living through two world wars and the great depression as well as having had ten children hadn't left her with the cheeriest of natures. And she was a martyr to her arthritis. But let's not defame the dead.

What she would never have appreciated – and nor do the majority of people today – is that as this pandemic casts its grisly shadow across the world like the plot of an all too familiar Hollywood plague movie, human adaptability kicks in. And creativity. A crisis can suddenly become transformed into an opportunity. The problem is that so many people are gripped by varying degrees of stress, panic, depression, isolation and fear that they don't notice this.

I'm not talking about commercial opportunities available to funeral directors, mask manufacturers or vaccine makers. I'm talking about opportunities for self-development as well as making the world a better place.

At this time of mayhem, madness and meltdown, those on some kind of spiritual journey and/or those with esoteric leanings may possibly have something of an edge over those who embrace a purely materialistic view of themselves and the world. Why? It's not just because the spiritually mature tend not to empty supermarket shelves but because spiritual people and esotericists see the world in a completely different way from the majority. Or at least they try to. They seek out the hidden explanations for outward events using a series of timeless and immutable laws. They try not to mistake causes for effects. They look for the secret underpinnings of those events.

For a start, those people even vaguely aware of their spiritual selves may well be prepared for a bit of hardship. It comes with the territory. After all, spiritual progress and struggle are two sides of the same coin. Many people drift into a spiritual life because of the very hardship and struggle they've experienced. Some mistake the spiritual path for an easy option until it dawns on them that all spiritual progress involves its own rigours of one kind or another.

Some may have chosen deliberate hardship as part of their own sophisticated or crude attempts at spiritual development. Some may only have dabbled in the necessary disciplines to prepare themselves for an accelerated and undoubtedly

harsh evolutionary ascent. Some may have gone further and renounced either sex, meat or wine. Or all three.

Of course, this involves a vast spectrum of individuals and possible methods ranging from those who indulge in extreme and prolonged acts of self-mortification in a Himalayan cave to those who merely give up champagne on alternate Wednesdays.

But above all, your average esotericist normally belongs to quite an isolated sub-branch of the human pantheon to begin with. And at this time when the world has put up its shutters, it's a clear advantage having experience of this. Isolation can be hell for the uninitiated but heaven for the thinker. But your eso-spiritual type (we'll call them ESs for short) is often used to prolonged periods of solitude hunkered down, forlornly trying to unravel the intricacies of *The Secret Doctrine* or *The Mahatma Letters*. Or fighting a mighty inner war as to whether to meditate or switching on their favourite TV soap opera to find out whether Uncle Harry will be finally unmasked for his monstrous teenage indiscretions.

Your ESs tend to be normally quiet, introverted and pensive characters where a degree of social isolation is the norm. There are exceptions, of course. But some of this rare breed are very solitary creatures indeed, rarely venturing out into that harsh material world which they know is just *māyā* or illusion anyway, but which still seems to stubbornly persist outside their front doors.

I possess quite a few ES characteristics myself despite having spent half a century in the murky, corpse-strewn world of journalism working amongst all its sordid strata from TV and radio to newspapers and even the deeply unethical world of public relations. I say 'despite' because for most of the last twenty years I've been one of that abandoned breed of scribblers formerly known as freelancers and now better known as members of the gig economy. I've spent most of that time these last two decades working from home alone pounding the laptop keys trying to make a crust.

As anyone who's tried it knows, writing is a lonely, isolating business at the best of times. Like many creative pursuits it's a form of solitary confinement and requires its own monastic levels of self-discipline. It's not for everyone. In fact, it drives some people crazy. It's probably done the same to me but I haven't noticed yet.

So, with two decades of quasi self-isolation behind me – and with a number of key ES characteristics – here are a few of my suggestions for surviving this rebellious act of nature if indeed that is what it is. Call them my seven top survival tips-cum-opportunities.

One: Humour.

Retain your sense of humour if you have one. If you don't, develop one as quickly as possible because humour is a far better antidote to a crisis than hoarding toilet rolls. Unless of course you're American in which case a visit to the local gun shop may be more appropriate. Humour is the human spirit in action. Humour is a vital commodity and survival tool in times of war. You can't win without it. Laughter is often the best medicine.

Two: Learn to like yourself.

Difficult one this, especially for people like me who've always had an uneasy and slightly awkward relationship with themselves. But what better time than now to get more closely acquainted and become more fond of yourself? Now you've got the time, the motive and opportunity to be kinder inwardly. And besides, what else would you be doing except watching old films or staring at the wallpaper? Once you like yourself a little more, you can start liking others, too. It's a win-win situation.

Three: Banish panic.

If you can manage it also add fear, despondency, pessimism, anxiety and hopelessness to the *verboden* list and deport them from your mind. In case you didn't know, the world has a collective consciousness and we all contribute to it all the time. So, inserting a few positive thoughts into the mix is better than injecting abject terror or the other negative emotions so readily spewed out at times like this.

Four: Do something you've never done before.

Obviously in lockdown situations opportunities for leaping from aircraft or travelling to a Peruvian temple are somewhat limited so you may have to significantly narrow your horizons and look at what is more immediately available. In my own case I'm attempting two as yet unrealised endeavours: finishing a book about – of all things, death – and trying to develop something which has always proved deeply elusive – patience. You'll have many things you've always wanted to do and now you should. Not because you're going to die but because you're going to live.

Five: Help someone if you can.

Helping others helps you. Despite what grim-minded biologists like Richard Dawkins insist, we don't have a selfish gene. In fact, a great many people are naturally quite altruistic. Something as straight forward as a phone call or an email to a friend may make all the difference to them. And you. A pleasant word may

lift the spirits of a stranger or a neighbour. Small acts of charity and kindness count. And it will do your future karma no harm at all.

Six: Be self-reliant.

The esoteric/spiritual life is all about standing on your own two feet and facing difficulties – often alone. It's about accepting the situation. Above all, it's about not shifting the blame on to others. It's about taking responsibility and where necessary initiative. It's the times of darkness and difficulty which both shape and reveal a person's true character, not the good times when life is easy.

Seven: Go within.

There's no better place to be and it's where all the answers are anyway. And you don't find Covid-19 in inner space. Now you have the time for that introspection and inner journeying you've always craved, so in the words of that Hippie icon Jerry Rubin, 'Just do it!' Or in the immortal words of The Beatles, '*Turn off your mind, relax and float downstream...*'