

IN THE MIDST OF A PANDEMIC

Making memories or missing opportunities?

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Do you take pictures? Video? Selfies? Are you camera shy? If you are like many bereaved people, you have regretted not having taken the time for more pictures of your loved ones who've died.

Why take pictures now while the world is reel-ing from illness, death, paranoia and protests?

Because someday this will all be history. By capturing memories now, years from now you can share the memories with those who are not yet born, too young to understand, and anyone else who wishes to look back on this time in our history.



To place it in context, might you have found it interesting if you discovered writings from your ancestors who lived through the plague of 1918?

Each day you carry around a miracle. You have something that your ancestors could have only imagined. With the push of a button, you can capture the moment—forever.

Looking back, you may wish you would have done it more often in the past. And, given the pain you are in as you cope with your grief, taking pictures and video may seem like a trivial task you don't care much about.

As you read this, the initial stages of the virus have moved on. However, there is still much to record as we continue to be in the middle of it. Are your family members interacting more than they ever have? In March, 2020 I asked my college students to state one positive thing that happened to them during the previous week. The most common response went something like this: I've been interacting with my family members more than I ever have—and, it's nice.

There may never be another time when so many of you will be around one another. Take advantage of these extraordinary times: pictures of the entire group and photos of people doing things together.

But, do what you can while there is still time. Take video of people coming and going, of loved ones wearing masks, of events on TV, of people eating dinner, hugging, laughing, playing games, dancing, or just hanging out. Another way to capture the moment is to write about it. Keep a journal, write a poem, react to the news, and/or narrate a day in your life as these events swirl around you.

Here are a few suggestions for capturing life's moments:

1. Capture events, even if they have already happened. For example, just after a funny event has taken place, I would still grab my video camera and say to the people involved (as they are laughing), "What just happened?" Later, when we view the video, we laugh almost as hard even though we had not caught the event as it was happening.
2. Don't be intrusive. Shoving a phone or camera in a person's face will usually not get you praise. I have found that most camera-shy people will relax if you are not pushy.
3. Engage your subjects. Don't set up your phone on the kitchen counter and walk away. Get as close to people as comfort will allow. This will capture good, full-face views, something those who know the person will later appreciate.
4. Don't forget to include yourself. In addition to selfies, you can hand the phone to someone else. There is the argument that pulling out a camera takes away from the spontaneity of the moment and that the person holding the camera loses out on being part of the group interaction. I've found this not to be true. The only exception is when the camera-person is taking pictures most of the time and missing out on the real fun.
5. Don't videotape or take pictures of someone without their knowledge unless you absolutely know they would approve of what you have captured. You don't want to get the reputation of being a stealthy photographer, creating paranoid friends and relatives.
6. Don't forget to download your videos and photos. As you know, something could happen to your phone and, in an instant, all could be lost.
7. At the end of each day or week, talk about the events into your phone or write about them.

As you know all too well, life is short. You have already experienced the death of one or more precious people. Your job is to learn from the past and use the little miracle you carry in your hand to capture the memories of your life and the life of those around you especially in this time of uncertainty. Trust me, you won't regret it.