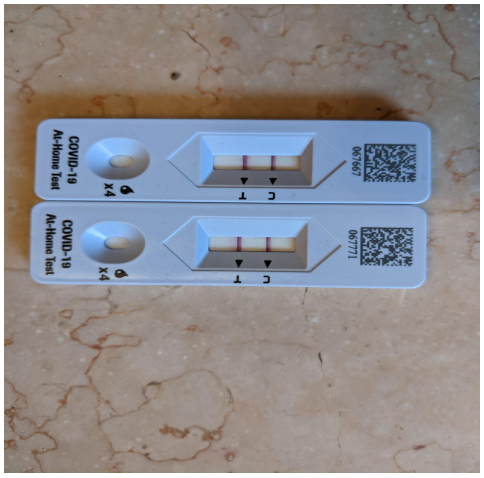
Ding Dong Ditch: A Personal Experiment in Social Isolation

Up until now I have survived unscathed by the dreaded Covid virus, that is until 5 days ago. Hit me like a common cold, and although I had my feelers up, testing 2 and 3 times a day based on some positive cases in a facility I consult in, I still felt I was in the clear.

Fever began over the weekend (I always seem to get sick on the weekend, NOT FAIR) and low and behold, the home test came back positive. So I did another one… Son of a GUN!! There it was, the truth mocking me with two positive tests.



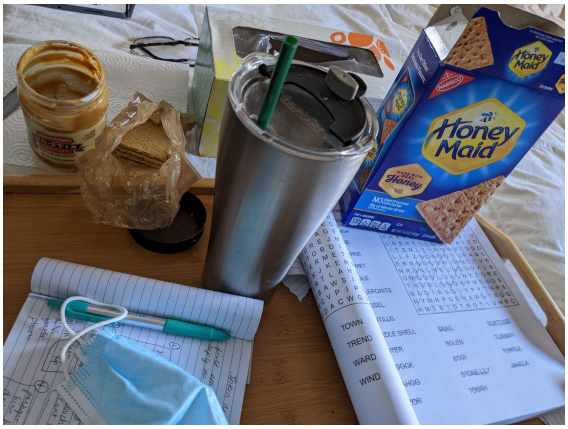
Isolation began, locked in my bedroom. My husband essentially moved to another part of the room, and hasn't entered since. The boredom set in rather quickly (as I am a do-er, not a sitter!) and although the coughing and hacking and headache and fatigue slowed me down, I could not believe what a prisoner I had become in my own home.

I started referring to my husband as my "jailer" and posted a sign on my door for eventual freedom.

Like a lonely and trapped cat lady, I found the energy to clean out my sock drawer for Good Will donations.

When this all began, everyone forgot I needed nutrition, so I scoured the room for something, anything to eat. I realized I may have to survive on old Easter candy at the bottom of a drawer, menthol cough drops and Beach flavored lotion.

Now, when food is delivered to me it's like a game of Ding Dong Ditch, left outside my door with a brief knock and an announcement, as I hear the quick scatter of feet running down the stairs before I can even get to the door to retrieve the meal (and I use the word “meal” lightly as I am trapped with 3 boys. Their definition of food is much different than mine). Today my breakfast consisted of graham crackers and peanut butter, which by the way I cannot taste because I have lost all sense of taste and smell.



With all this being said as my outlet for feeling sorry for myself, I see this as an opportunity to better understand the residents that are sick as well. Isolation doesn't make any sense to them, and the “plague attitude” of others towards the sick is very sad. No one likes to feel unapproachable, untouchable and yet with all the PPE we are required to wear just to interact, there is no alternative to that experience.

I have been guiding my Activity Assistant via text and she is exhausted, sweating constantly and working afraid that she may get sick as well. At first she was stressed that there were so few residents engaging in programs and then, together, we flipped the focus. Moments of joy!

1. Set up the christmas tree now,

2. Go through the old decorations with the residents and toss the un-usable
3. Help the residents plan what they want for this year, nothing is more healing than online shopping therapy
4. Play christmas music (no, it is not too early)
5. Pass snacks and drinks from room to room with those more comfortable in bed
6. Conduct conversation groups in the hallway with small groups
7. Provide orientation, truly it helps. Feeling out of touch with reality (time, date, weather) helps. I know that not everyone benefits, but it helps to feel like someone else is interested in keeping you informed.
8. Push hydration. If they are lacking in taste and smell, food is disinteresting, but fluids are important (chicken soup in a crock pot, passed in mugs? Tea with honey? Anything soothing)
9. Let them SLEEP!!!
10. Take credit for all the interactions you are providing
11. Take your own breathing breaks without PPE- and do it often
12. Brush up on your PPE procedures: Gown, Mask, Shield, Gloves (use the acronym: GMSG: Give Me Some Grace)
13. If possible, run some chair stretch exercises. I found that when I use the yoga mat on my bedroom floor for 10 minutes to stretch and do leg lifts, I feel better afterwards. Something that simple and soothing can help lighten everyone's mood

For those of you who have been to this rodeo before, you probably have even more insight and grand ideas on how to get through this new 2022 winter wave. Please share that with others, every piece of advice can help us all get through this. For those of you riding this rodeo for the first time, stay well, stay safe, keep calm, and take care of yourself. Do lots of self care during your work day and even more after. With fingers crossed, this too shall pass.