



By Joe Byerly

I recently arrived back to the States from an overseas deployment, and unlike previous homecomings this one was different. There were no welcome home parties; no celebratory dinner at my favorite restaurant; no trips to Disney World or the beach.

COVID-19 is changing everything.

'If Only vs. 'What is'

Nothing is how I left it 9 months ago; the world has changed. As one of my former bosses says, "Normal is only a cycle on a washing machine."

If I focus on the 'If only' or how things should be -not as they currently are, it can get depressing.

If only....the kids were back in school

If only....We could go out to eat with friends.

If only....The gym were still open

With an 'If only' outlook, it becomes easy to get wrapped up in the unfairness of life and stayed glued to the news, binge watch Netflix, or even start day drinking.

With an 'If only' mindset we tend to spend a lot of time in our own heads reconciling expectations with reality. We waste a lot of energy and mental bandwidth on focusing on what's not the same or how things should be. And we do this at the cost of action.

It might feel like we are in motion because we're researching the latest COVID-19 updates, liking Facebook posts, or even updating our own statuses. But in reality, we're standing still.

That is why I'm working on 'What is',

A "What is' mindset adapts our thinking to the current moment. It's only after we are able to see the situation for what it is, we can start looking for the opportunity within the experience.

Alive Time or Dead Time

A few years ago I read a [post by Ryan Holiday](#) that has shaped my outlook --especially during times when I found myself in a tough place. He quotes advice he received from his mentor [Robert Greene](#):

He told me there are two types of time: alive time and dead time. One is when you sit around, when you wait until things happen to you. The other is when you are in control, when you make every second count, when you are learning and improving and growing.

I'm struggling through all of this. But, I'm doing my best to take the current situation as 'What is' and making it my alive time. For me, this means spending time with my family, tackling long-needed home projects, working on fitness goals, and a lot of reading and writing.

So, while the current situation isn't ideal, it provides us with opportunities. Opportunities to choose alive time. Opportunities to reflect on life; Opportunities to start a new habit; Opportunities to spend time with our families; Opportunities to improve fitness. The list is endless, but it only starts once we stop focusing on "If only"

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