

AVON IA

Letter from Your Chair, Dr Claire Rumball

Dear Members, Family, Friends and Supporters,

I have decided to write a letter to you all, rather than the usual Newsletter this time. It just seemed too sad to produce a Newsletter with little positive content, with no reports and pictures of our meals and meetings and skittles matches etc. And no dates for our diaries! We have had to cancel our Bath Members Meeting on 14.11.20 and it seems safer to not make any dates for meetings or meals at the moment. We are thinking about doing a 'zoom' meeting; if this is something you are interested in please phone or email Kerr or I or any of your Committee.

I hope this finds you bearing up under the strain of this Pandemic and its associated trials and tribulations. Hopefully, our senses of humour and our hard-earnt resilience from dealing with bowel illness, stomas and bags, and pouches will serve us well keeping our spirits up. Because this will end, in time, and we can get back to all the lovely social events without masks and social distancing. Roll on that happy day!

In the meantime, here are some things I have learnt or discovered which may help or give you food for thought too.

Writing to the Letters page, in The Guardian, Trevor Smith, a Hospice chaplain, talked about teaching Medical Students about their role in care. He would remind them of the French verb *patienter*, which means "hang on" when on the phone. "Sometimes listening can be a more effective pain reliever, than tablets or injections".

Idea from National Trust Autumn Magazine, Phillipa Shelldrake: 'Sparkles Jar'

"My sister, who is interested in mindfulness, told us that every time something good happened it was worth writing it down, to remember later. You write it on a scrap of paper and pop in what's known as a 'mindfulness jar'. We decided to start one last year and Bee called it the 'sparkles jar' because she said looking through the memories would add sparkle to your day. Then, on New Year's Day, we sat down together and went through all the notes we'd put in. There's less going in at the moment because of lockdown, but we're still finding things to be thankful for"

How about it, shall we all start sparkle jars and then bring them along to our next meeting, to talk about our happy memories of this time?

And lastly a poem my dear friend and colleague, Maggie Ducker, gave me when I was going through a tricky time. Maggie sadly died six years ago from ovarian cancer but I think of her often, her wisdom and kindness.

The Journey

On the day you finally knew what you had to do, and began.
Though the voices around you kept shouting their bad advice –
Though the whole house began to tremble and you felt the old tug at your
ankles.
“Mend my life!” each voice cried,
But you didn’t stop.
You knew what you had to do,
Though the wind pried
With its stiff fingers, at the very foundations,
though their melancholy was terrible.
It was already late enough and a wild night,
And the road full of fallen branches and stones.
But little by little,
As you left their voices behind,
The stars began to burn through the sheets of clouds.
And there was a new voice which you slowly recognised as your own,
That kept you company,
As you strode deeper and deeper into the world,
Determined to do the only thing you could do –
Determined to save the only life you could save.

Mary Oliver

Take care everyone, hope to see you soon

Claire Rumball

Chair.avon@iasupport.org

01225 852243