

Sensei Pitt
10 Chugach Ave
Kenai Alaska
99611

The American Prison Writing Archive
C/O Hamilton College: 198 College Hill Road
Clinton NY
13323-1218

December 2020

COVID Behind Bars: Stress and Anti-stress agents.

The CDC recommends the following COVID-19 prevention measures;

- **Wear masks;**
- **Practice Social distancing i.e. stay 6 feet apart;**
- **Wash Hands frequently.**

Today marks the third consecutive day of transfers into this facility of prisoners from a hot zone prison that is seeing 89% positive cases of infected prisoners and staff.

This has raised the anxiety levels of the prisoners at this facility because thus far there has only been a mild outbreak twice this year of 5 staff and 4 contact prisoners with a total of 15 prisoners "quarantined or isolated" for 10 to 14 days.

The influx of "recovered" prisoners into a facility that has managed to escape full scale infections is at the very least insanity or intentional disregard of prisoners lives, or intentionally attempting to reach "herd immunity" by exposing as many prisoners to the virus to just get over the restrictions already.

I am a healthy 58-year old white male prisoner 25 years into a 99-year sentence, and I am doing all I can to practice the CDC's recommendations regarding COVID-19 prevention but I have to deal with the prisoners and staff around me that just don't get what exactly the Corona virus is.

I live in a cell that was designed to hold two men and now houses three, eat in a chow hall with 100 other men, (none of whom wear masks while eating) wash my hands so often they are cracked and dried out from the new soap and sanitizer's installed post-COVID.

I live in a facility that is an old military installation that is so old it has no central ventilation and the only air circulation is through the windows in the cells that open to allow the sub arctic air outside to chill cells to a comfortable 60'.

This causes the bathrooms to become particularly foulest because prisoners don't want to open the windows and allow the cold air in so they would rather sit in their own stench and expose others the same condition whether they want it or not.

The current sanitizer available through the daily cleaning program will eat your flesh and will cause you to cough through two layers of cloth masks, which can't be good for your lungs right? At one time there was bleach made available on the housing units for sterilizing things like the phones and door knobs and other multi-use areas but it was removed from the housing floors as to costly, or subject to miss-use, improper dilution etc.

The officer who had it removed just returned to work after a 14-day Quarantine because she tested positive and was symptomatic for 8 days of her quarantine. There was an effort to isolate any prisoner who spent close contact time in her office yet their cell roommates were not isolated. Then after 14 days in isolation/quarantine they were returned to their same floors and some to their same prior cells where they re-established contact with the same staff who infected them in the first place that caused them to be placed in quarantine/isolation.

I am told by staff that I cannot pick and choose my roommates and that means that they can place pre-trial prisoners in my cell who may or may not have completed the 2 negative tests to be released from quarantine/isolation after entering the facility from the streets. (these tests have 1/3 failure rate)

I have had one cellmate question the use of masks in the library and he was removed from his 7-year library job and put in "isolation" until it was assured he was docile enough to return to general population, yet not to his old cell and job like everyone else who actually tested positive.

The retaliation against anyone who dares to question the procedures of COVID-19 prevention is swift and severe to include; loss of employment, property, cell assignment and months in isolation/quarantine all to silence any whistleblowers and set an example to any others as to what can and will happen should they choose to resist the harness also.

I have written the administration with my concerns and they tell me to be patient and follow all staff directives and the latest CDC guidelines **as staff understand them to be**. This is likened to following the President's advice to breath deep and get over it, he did and he feels fine. I cannot blindly follow directives from an administration that thrives on propoganda and misdirection, so I seek out current information that will allow me to make informed decisions

I spend my own hard earned money to order vitamins and natural herbal supplements that are deficient in my prison diet so that I can remain as healthy as possible and hopefully survive this epidemic despite the administrations best efforts to infect as many prisoners as possible.

What do I do to handle stress with all this going on? I meditate and I litigate and I try to help other prisoners keep healthy by educating them to the causes of the infections all around us. I try to isolate in my cell as much as possible so that I reduce the odds of my chances of infection but it's only a matter of time before it eventually finds me too.

I worked in this state's only DOC medical ward with negative atmosphere cells and have firsthand experience as to the states response to infectious diseases and end of life treatments. I witnessed several prisoners die a slow and agonizing death. There were several prisoners who became so physically debilitated that they had to be and fed and diapered like babies and they couldn't even communicate their pain unless you looked in their eyes or listened to the clenching of their teeth. You would never know it just by walking by their beds, which was standard procedure for the nursing staff and DR's working the unit.

The conditions for infectious prisoners are total isolation except for daily meals and vitals which were performed by untrained prisoners who were told to gown up for the airborne infectious cases and to just wear gloves for all the others. Due to HEPA regulations prisoners were not informed of prisoner's specific illnesses and this allowed for miss-handling of precautions necessary for each case.

Due to the conditions I witnessed while a PCA, (Personal Care Assistant), I searched out an Advanced Health Care Directive and filed it with the medical department, the courts, and a friend and family member so that I would not be treated like a vegetable, watered and fed until I died a painful and prolonged death.

I know that I and my fellow comrades around me in this prison system will be the last in line to get any vaccine and I fear an allergic reaction that can be life threatening as proven in the first round applications of them. With DOC's lies about the risks and immediate treatment for any reactions and/or the simple availability if EPPIE pens.

The daily news reports of the fatalities state, nation and worldwide adds another layer of isolation to the equation because there is nothing that I can do if my family or friends catch it and I will count myself lucky to even be notified if and when it happens as has happened in the past already.

The world is quickly changing due to the pandemic as it has happened in the past history of mankind and it will continue to do so as we learn how to deal with the cross contamination on the global stage that we are currently experiencing on an individual basis among our communities that is causing a shift in the perspectives of who we are as a society.

I take solace in the teachings of the Buddha in a simple statement he made when questioned about the imponderables (anything you can't change or are powerless over). He said to not expend energy on the contemplation of these ideas or issues because they just cause additional stress and serve no purpose only detrimental to your spirit and mind consciousness.

I start each day with a silent prayer for the cessation of suffering in this world and let go what I cannot change, light an incense for the dearly departed and another for the not so dearly departed., try to pass on a little peace to others each day any way I can.

Submitted this 22 day of 2020 from Kenai Alaska

Sensej Pitt

