

The New Secret to Success? No Expectations.

We're all a little exhausted and desperate. Admitting it is OK.

By Jason Gray in the Wall Street Journal



I no longer expect much from the day, the week, myself, and the world around me. It's like being a Detroit Lions fan, writes columnist Jason Gay.

I need another haircut.

My last haircut, it went poorly. I locked myself in the bathroom with the cordless hair clippers and only the vaguest of notions. When I emerged, my wife laughed like I hadn't heard her laugh in years—loud, staccato, Woody Woodpecker-style guffaws.

Let me get the camera! she said.

Not what you want to hear after you cut your own hair.

Here's where we stand, in the second week of May: Parts of the country are starting to reopen, but it feels gradual, imprecise, wary. Life isn't exactly back to normal. The Great American Stay-At-Home has yielded to the something more like...muddling through.

My own stay-at-home has a rough patch. I'll admit: it's getting a little grizzly in here. We've gone shower-optional. I'm eating too many lunches in pajamas. It's been at least eight weeks since I've worn a collared shirt. I've forgotten how to tie a necktie. I'm giving my dress shoes away to the neighborhood dogs. I'm letting the kids fight with kitchen knives and pole vault in the living room.

And nope: I still haven't made that sourdough bread.

That last quarantine haircut? It was a month ago, and while the front of my head looks half-decent, the back looks as if a passel of opossums have built themselves a comfy nest. I fear the cordless clippers won't suffice for my next cut. I am going to need commercial farm equipment.

But here's the thing: I don't really mind. I'm not demanding perfection right now. I ain't Tom Brady, people; I eat carbs. Amid unsettled times, I have settled into a peaceful groove, and the groove is called "declining standards."

I no longer expect much from the day, the week, myself, and the world around me.

It's like being a Detroit Lions fan, but for everything in life.

Have you ever met a Lions fan? They're calm, well-balanced people. Absolutely nothing surprises them.

Please don't worry. I'm fine and happy. I know how lucky and fortunate I am. I merely believe that the new expectation is no expectations. I've come to terms with the fact that years from now, when my grandchildren ask, "Grandad, how did you spend the Great Quarantine?" I'll pause for a bit and say *Ummm...I don't know. I ate a lot of pretzels?*



Balcony Workouts and Singalongs: Socializing in the Time of Coronavirus

In cities around the world, balcony singing, workouts and other improvised events can fill the silence of empty streets. Here's how developing creative ways to connect with others is helping some people cope with coronavirus quarantines. Photo: Alberico/Fotogramma/Ropi/Zuma Press

I don't think there's anything wrong with acknowledging this. Nobody's got a full handle on the situation. No one finishes the day without a few existential lows. Loneliness intrudes. Boredom persists. Even the introverts are like: *Alright, that's enough.*

I know a lot of you are feeling stir crazy, too. You're yowling at the moon. The week is a dull blur. You don't know whether it's Sunday or Thursday. You're worn down by the constant drip of downbeat news from around the world. You are having strange dreams in which you sit at a table with strangers and order margaritas and nachos at a Chili's.

Walk? You don't need another walk.

Another Zoom cocktail? Bleccch.

The virtual world has lost its appeal. We need humanity. When will we find ourselves again in a packed room? When will we go to the movies? Get on an airplane?

Sports? Don't ask me when sports will be back. Maybe late summer. Maybe the fall. Maybe not until 2044. The people who run these sports, they don't know either. The dribs and drabs of "news" from the leagues—[bio-bubbles](#), testing plans, [schedule releases](#)—are hopeful and amorphous.

Wondering when sports will happen—that's the new National Pastime.

Honestly, I just want to be in a crowd, which is ironic, since, like a lot of folks, I spent so much of my pre-quarantine life aggravated by crowds and traffic. I groaned about invites to faraway weddings, company retreats, even birthday parties. I wore headphones nearly everywhere I went. A simple walk down the street had to be a respite from the hurly-burly.

My solitude was precious. Nothing made me happier than a canceled lunch.

Now? I'd go to your wedding in Alaska. I'd go to your birthday party, too. I'd be the first to arrive, the last to leave, and I'd make twisty dog balloons for all the kids. I'd give anything for a work lunch, in a busy, noisy restaurant, with a giant basket of bread, about to order a salad and a Diet Coke and...

No, not today. We're going to have the steak sandwich. And then a drink. Why the heck not?

Amid our social distancing, we're being reminded that we actually liked being around each other.

[Consider school](#). When this whole thing began, part of me thought: *Finally. We're going to see that school is primed for disruption, that a lot of education can be done at home, for a lot less money.* It turns out we vastly underrated the socialization aspect of school, the camaraderie of a classroom. My kids, they don't miss their books. They miss their friends. They miss screaming and yelling and goofing off.

That's what I miss, too. That's what keeps me hopeful. The time will come when I'll cut my hair and shave my beard and relearn how to tie a tie. Then again, maybe I won't. I don't miss wearing a tie. I miss all of you.

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