



An InterPlay/Body Wisdom, Inc. Response to the Coronavirus

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What we know about COVID-19, the disease caused by the Coronavirus, is changing rapidly. Alongside growing concerns are plans and practices that many people and organizations are taking on to help address this issue.

The InterPlay community may also play a role. We encourage everyone to stay up to date on the most recent news about best practices related to slowing the spread of the virus. In line with a basic InterPlay ethos, each person should feel empowered to take care of themselves fully.

At the moment, health officials are suggesting major actions to slow the spread of the virus. The most likely path for infection is from droplets containing the virus being passed through sneezing and coughing or being passed hand to hand (where transfer might happen as we touch our faces with an infected hand). The virus can also survive on surfaces.

These often-repeated practices are being encouraged:

- wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow or into a tissue that you dispose of (and then wash your hands)
- avoid touching your face with your hands
- if you have a cough or other symptoms, take extra actions to stay out of contact with others.
- disinfect often-touched surfaces

As InterPlayers who are committed to paying attention to the wisdom of the body, we would add these thoughts:

We can address and manage our fears. Although that response in the human body has its role, fear rarely leads us to our best wisdom, especially in the long-term. We can manage and address our fear responses using the tools we have on hand—exformation, breathing and sighing, etc.—as well as putting alongside it all the other things we know about relative risk and our propensity toward hope.

For many, making beauty is an antidote to fear. What beauty are you making? Dancing, singing, and resting can help re-center our health. As we know, “playing with” our circumstances, remaining curious, and staying in the present continue to be powerful ways to address the unknown.

We must resist fear responses that would lead us to shun or blame particular people. It can be all too easy at times like these to look for “scapegoats” and it is often the most vulnerable who suffer. Because the spread of the virus is a world-wide concern, we have the opportunity to see ourselves as one body—we’re all in this together. One of the odd realities of this situation is that we don’t entirely know where the virus is, even as cases are reported. *Statistically*, the chance that you are in the presence of the virus may be small, but if as many people as possible institute some common-sense practices, it will *statistically* decrease the likelihood of the virus spreading. At the very least, for us to adopt practices that reduce the spread of viruses should have the expected effect of reducing the spread of colds and the flu, which is itself a good thing. We may be washing our hands “in solidarity” with those who might be in an area more significantly affected by the virus, and they with us.

“Social distancing” is also a practice that is being recommended, and in some locations required. This has become a crucial practice in stemming the tide of infection. As body-wise people, we know that social and physical contact is an important, even crucial, part of our overall health. Evidence would support that it also strengthens our immune systems. Therefore, we can be discerning about the distancing that we are doing and how we are looking at that distancing. We are encouraging our community to think about “social distancing” more as “physical distancing.” From there we can figure out creative ways to have our social connections in ways that are also safe. At a point in teaching Hand-to-Hand contact, we invite people to put space between their hands and still keep the connection, even moving further away in the room. Remember that we can always “put our hands up” to connect with others in direct and mysterious ways.

A powerful practice in these odd days is to pay attention to the “physicality of grace.” What are the things you do, the people you are with, the places you go that increase that in your lives? Make sure you are getting as much of that as possible. This will help counterbalance the fear and concern that is a part of this crisis and will also be good for your overall health.

The desire to “run” from people and places more directly affected by the virus is understandable, but it is important to remember that the danger of this virus has to do with proximity. Fear leads us to create a wider safety zone than probably makes sense rationally. For example, the cruise ship carrying some with the virus docking in Oakland doesn’t put the whole city of Oakland at risk. We can be discerning about how we want to manage our sense of safety.

At this point, more and more InterPlay events are being moved online. We encourage you to stay abreast of recommendations or restrictions made by local, state, or federal governments and to follow them. These seem to be changing on a day-to-day basis.

We are also sharing information with leaders about how you can set up online InterPlay classes through Zoom, which we have been using for several years to good effect. It is

easier to play together online than you might think! To get an experience of this (and for your general well-being!) you could join the online Dance Chapel (Monday 5 pm and Thursday 9:30 am, CA time). More on that at http://www.interplay.org/index.cfm/go/events:event/happening_id/2368/ or email Cynthia for instructions on how to connect to that Zoom event.

Be careful consumers of information. Pay attention to the sources of your information. Look to experts you can trust. Pay attention to information you hear repeated from a variety of trusted sources. Be skeptical if information seems to be coming from just a place of fear. Social media may not be the best place to look for wisdom or answers. Because the situation is changing quickly, it is important to stay up to date with new information. In the InterPlay “body data/knowledge/wisdom” framework, we are pretty much in the “body data” phase, although some “body knowledge” is also developing. There is still plenty of room for “body wisdom” to be discerned. We can be an active part of that process.

One of the downsides of the outbreak of the virus is that it is affecting our economy. Although a case can be made for all of us to do less and spend less, drastic shifts in our spending patterns will likely most affect those in already-vulnerable financial situations. So, you might consider the financial repercussions of what you do and don't do and how those effects can be mitigated. I would hope that businesses and organizations would be willing to help take care of the members of their community as people make challenging decisions about staying home from work when they are sick or to take care of loved ones who are sick.

If you have additional thoughts to share about this current situation and the ways that InterPlayers might respond, feel free to be in touch with InterPlay cofounders, Phil Porter or Cynthia Winton-Henry at Cynthia@interplay.org, 510-465-2797. www.interplay.org

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