



# The Torch



Edition 13

## Foreword from our chairman



Dear Colleagues and Friends

Wow! We certainly are experiencing unusual and interesting times, as we grapple with a challenge that is affecting the whole globe – us at St. Dunstan's too.

This newsletter contains several accounts of how beneficiaries have turned lockdown into a special opportunity to do something different or to acquire new skills. We draw inspiration from their efforts. As Charmaine has described Covid 19 in her blog, our ability is stronger than any disability – and isn't technology awesome!

We are mindful of how, for instance, so many musicians, singers and sound engineers have gotten together to use their skills, knowledge and aptitudes constructively and collaboratively, synchronising, harmonising, using their fine musical ears to create virtual music shows and indeed celebrations, despite the challenges of separation and physical distancing.

Our grateful thanks go out to the many workers who are keeping essential services going, despite the risks and exposures – times like these remind us of the dedication, skill and human care practised by our medical fraternity, healthcare workers and all who support our clinics, hospitals and medical facilities. And we recognise also the service given by police and law enforcement personnel, supported by the SANDF – the biggest military call-up since WWII. May they keep safe and injury-free.

One old soldier who has never given up is the UK's now world famous Captain Tom Moore. As he approached his 100th birthday, Captain Tom was determined to walk around his garden 100 times – with the aid of his walking frame – to raise a target of £1 000 for the National Health Service. As a WWII war veteran, he understood well what the medics were so often called upon to do.

Never did he imagine the impact he would have, in inspiring those around him with just those few steps of courage and determination ....

- He was joined on the BBC in a cover version of the song “You will never walk alone”
  
- Far from raising £1 000, he has reached out to more than 1,5 million people who have donated no less than £32,7 million (£32 794 701 to be exact – that’s pretty close to R 700 million)
  
- At the age of 100, he now holds two world records in the Guinness Book of Records
  - for the greatest amount of money raised in a single fundraising walk
  - and as the oldest person ever to have a No. 1 single on the UK music charts
  
- His birthday was celebrated with, for example, a special flypast from the Royal Air Force and messages from VIP’s including the Queen and the Secretary-General of the United Nations
  
- He has been appointed as the honorary colonel at the Army Foundation College, the UK’s Yorkshire-based Army Junior Leader training centre

And above all, he has inspired many other people to raise funds by walking, to rise above their restrictions and limitations and to get on with doing their level best and encouraging others.

“You’ll never walk alone” became the theme of his story.

And this is our theme too, in St. Dunstan’s, the reason why we were started all those years ago, and what we continue to do. Walk on, walk together,

walk with your head held high and with a sense of purpose, with courage and determination. St. Dunstan's will walk beside you – it's a collaborative journey yet one that can only be based upon trust, integrity and mutual respect.

On behalf of the Board and our management team, our very best wishes to you all. As the "Daily Show" stalwart Trevor Noah exhorts us, "May you all stay lockdown positive and corona negative."

Until we can meet again.

Dave Mitchell

Chairman

## Beneficiary News

### Renier Heyns

Lockdown came as quite a shock to us. Never in my life would I believe that such a thing would happen to us. I mean staying away from work for more than a month. Unthinkable!

During the first week it was frightening waking up without an alarm and not going into work. But after some thinking about the situation, I decided to make the most of it. At first, I started to do some diy and started fixing some things around the house that was out of order but never had the time to do it, such as our grandmother clock which needed a service.



Years ago, I taught myself how to play the guitar so decided to teach myself how to play the harmonic together with my guitar. I took up another new hobby and bought myself a drone a while ago as a new challenge for

me. It took some time, but I succeeded in getting it into the air and fly it. I did this by hearing and listening carefully how to plot the position of the drone.



The rest of my time I spent having quality time with my wife and a good rest from work. It might be wrong to say but I am enjoying every minute of this break by keeping myself mentally fit.

Keep well and GOD bless

### **Pieter Engelbrecht**

Pieter enjoys keeping busy. His positive nature sees opportunities in all situations and often does not allow negative circumstances to stop him from doing his thing. Pieter used his time during lockdown to renovate the bar area in his house and built a beautiful cabinet. The cabinet was scrubbed, varnished and finished with a steel wool to get the smooth desired look. He is quite proud of his work and the finished cabinet looks great.



He has been busy with another project for over a year now. Given his talent and interest in cars as a motor mechanic by trade, Pieter has been working on a 1996 dolphin shape BMW E36. He has finished the engine and the car is finally ready to drive. He is now focussing his attention on the scrapes and marks on the car and keeping busy polishing it to a high standard.



## Accessibility Campaign - COVID19

The International Disability Alliance and the International Disability and Development Consortium have launched an Accessibility campaign to call for public health information and communications around COVID19 to be fully accessible.



### The Issue

Persons with disabilities are unable to access vital information about COVID-19 on equal basis with others. Daily briefings by World Health Organization, and the United Nations (such as those delivered by the Secretary-General) are not accessible. International Sign interpretation, closed captioning, written or audio description of graphs and videos, and documentation in plain language (easy-to-read) are not included in the daily briefings by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations.

### The Aim

To make the WHO and United Nations daily briefings and any supporting documents on COVID-19 fully accessible to persons with disabilities. We want them to set an example and show leadership to national governments and other actors in providing a fully accessible COVID-19 response by making all information that they disseminate fully accessible to persons with disabilities, keeping in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment No. 7 and the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy.

### Key campaign asks

Ensure public health information and communication around COVID -19 is fully accessible.

We want the United Nations daily briefings, and any supporting documents on COVID-19, to be fully accessible to persons with disabilities. All UN agencies should publish and share their information on COVID19 in accessible formats, including in which shared materials are accessible online for persons using screen reader software, and presentation materials accessible using universal design elemental and additional formats, such as the use of sign languages, Easy Read, plain language, captioned media, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and other accessible means.

We want national and local governments to follow the advice as laid out in the WHO COVID-19 Disability Briefing.

We call on all COVID-19 responders (including the UN, WHO and national governments) to work with representative organisations of persons with disabilities to distribute fully accessible public health information.

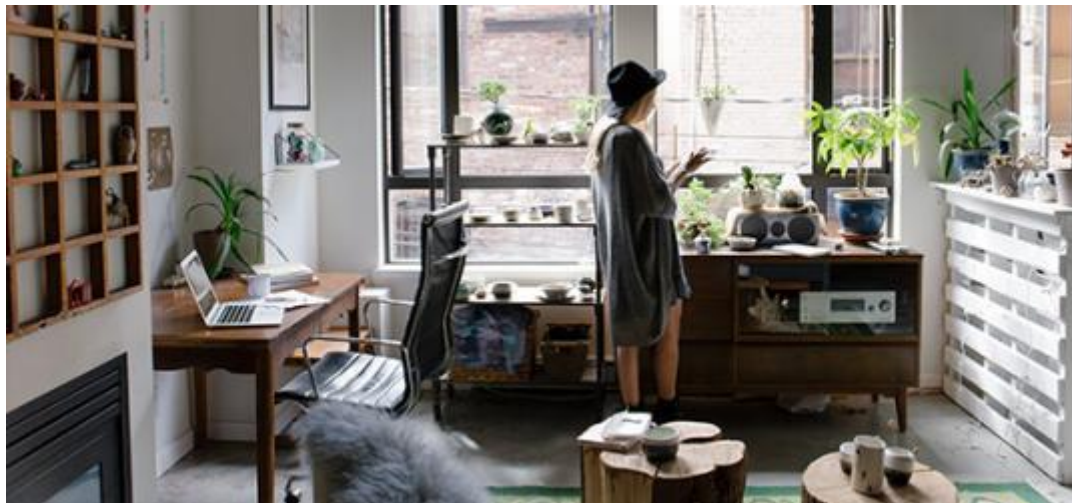
Source: [World Blind Union](#)

## Mental Health Wellness Tips for Quarantine

By: Eileen Feliciano | NYS Psychologist

After having thirty-one sessions this week with patients where the singular focus was COVID-19 and how to cope, I decided to consolidate my advice and make a list that I hope is helpful to all. I can't control a lot of what is going on right now, but I can contribute this.

Edit: I am surprised and heartened that this has been shared so widely! People have asked me to credential myself, so to that end, I am a doctoral level Psychologist in NYS with a Psy.D. in the specialities of School and Clinical Psychology.



### 1. Stick to a routine.

Go to sleep and wake up at a reasonable time, write a schedule that is varied and includes time for work as well as self-care.

### 2. Dress for the social life you want, not the social life you have.

Get showered and dressed in comfortable clothes, wash your face, brush your teeth. Take the time to do a bath or a facial. Put on some bright colors. It is amazing how our dress can impact our mood.

### 3. Get out at least once a day, for at least thirty minutes.

If you are concerned of contact, try first thing in the morning, or later in the evening, and try less travelled streets and avenues. If you are high risk or living with those who are high risk, open the windows and blast the fan. It is amazing how much fresh air can do for spirits.

### 4. Find some time to move each day, again daily for at least thirty minutes.

If you do not feel comfortable going outside, there are many YouTube videos that offer free movement classes, and if all else fails, turn on the music and have a dance party!

### 5. Reach out to others, you guessed it, at least once daily for thirty minutes.

Try to do FaceTime, Skype, phone calls, texting—connect with other people to seek and provide support. Do not forget to do this for your children as well. Set up virtual playdates with friends daily via FaceTime, Facebook Messenger Kids, Zoom, etc—your kids miss their friends, too!

### 6. Stay hydrated and eat well.

This one may seem obvious, but stress and eating often do not mix well, and we find ourselves over-indulging, forgetting to eat, and avoiding food. Drink plenty of water, eat some good and nutritious foods, and challenge yourself to learn how to cook something new!

### 7. Develop a self-care toolkit.

This can look different for everyone. A lot of successful self-care strategies involve a sensory component (seven senses: touch, taste, sight, hearing, smell, vestibular (movement) and proprioceptive (comforting pressure)). An idea for each: a soft blanket or stuffed animal, a hot chocolate, photos of vacations, comforting music, lavender or eucalyptus oil, a small swing or rocking chair, a weighted blanket. A journal, an inspirational book, or a mandala coloring book is wonderful, bubbles to blow or blowing watercolor on paper through a straw are visually appealing as well as work on controlled breath. Mint gum, Listerine strips, ginger ale, frozen Starburst, ice packs, and cold are also good for anxiety regulation. For children, it is great to help them create a self-regulation comfort box (often a shoe-box or bin they can decorate) that they can use on the ready for first-aid when overwhelmed.

### 8. Spend extra time playing with children.

Children will rarely communicate how they are feeling, but will often make a bid for attention and communication through play. Do not be surprised to see therapeutic themes of illness, doctor visits, and isolation play through. Understand that play is cathartic and helpful for children—it is how they process their world and problem solve, and there is a lot they are seeing and experiencing in the now.



## 9. Give everyone the benefit of the doubt, and a wide berth.

A lot of cooped up time can bring out the worst in everyone. Each person will have moments when they will not be at their best. It is important to move with grace through blowups, to not show up to every argument you are invited to, and to not hold grudges and continue disagreements. Everyone is doing the best they can to make it through this.

## 10. Everyone find their own retreat space.

Space is at a premium, particularly with city living. It is important that people think through their own separate space for work and for relaxation. For children, help them identify a place where they can go to retreat when stressed. You can make this place cozy by using blankets, pillows, cushions, scarves, beanbags, tents, and “forts”. It is good to know that even when we are on top of each other, we have our own special place to go to be alone.

## 11. Expect behavioral issues in children, and respond gently.

We are all struggling with disruption in routine, none more than children, who rely on routines constructed by others to make them feel safe and to know what comes next. Expect increased anxiety, worries and fears, nightmares, difficulty separating or sleeping, testing limits, and meltdowns. Do not introduce major behavioral plans or consequences at this time—hold stable and focus on emotional connection.

## 12. Focus on safety and attachment.

We are going to be living for a bit with the unprecedented demand of meeting all work deadlines, homeschooling children, running a sterile household, and making a whole lot of entertainment in confinement. We can get wrapped up in meeting expectations in all domains, but we must remember that these are scary and unpredictable times for children. Focus on strengthening the connection through time spent following their lead, through physical touch, through play, through therapeutic books, and via verbal reassurances that you will be there for them in this time.

## 13. Lower expectations and practice radical self-acceptance.

This idea is connected with #12. We are doing too many things in this moment, under fear and stress. This does not make a formula for excellence. Instead, give yourself what psychologists call “radical self acceptance”: accepting everything about yourself, your current situation, and your life without question, blame, or pushback. You cannot fail at this—there is no roadmap, no precedent for this, and we are all truly doing the best we can in an impossible situation.

## 14. Limit social media and COVID conversation, especially around children.

One can find tons of information on COVID-19 to consume, and it changes minute to minute. The information is often sensationalized, negatively

skewed, and alarmist. Find a few trusted sources that you can check in with consistently, limit it to a few times a day, and set a time limit for yourself on how much you consume (again 30 minutes tops, 2-3 times daily). Keep news and alarming conversations out of earshot from children—they see and hear everything, and can become very frightened by what they hear.

#### 15. Notice the good in the world, the helpers.

There is a lot of scary, negative, and overwhelming information to take in regarding this pandemic. There are also a ton of stories of people sacrificing, donating, and supporting one another in miraculous ways. It is important to counter-balance the heavy information with the hopeful information.

#### 16. Help others.

Find ways, big and small, to give back to others. Support restaurants, offer to grocery shop, check in with elderly neighbors, write psychological wellness tips for others—helping others gives us a sense of agency when things seem out of control.

#### 17. Find something you can control, and control the heck out of it.

In moments of big uncertainty and overwhelm, control your little corner of the world. Organize your bookshelf, purge your closet, put together that furniture, group your toys. It helps to anchor and ground us when the bigger things are chaotic.

#### 18. Find a long-term project to dive into.

Now is the time to learn how to play the keyboard, put together a huge jigsaw puzzle, start a 15 hour game of Risk, paint a picture, read the Harry Potter series, binge watch an 8-season show, crochet a blanket, solve a Rubix cube, or develop a new town in Animal Crossing. Find something that will keep you busy, distracted, and engaged to take breaks from what is going on in the outside world.

#### 19. Engage in repetitive movements and left-right movements.

Research has shown that repetitive movement (knitting, coloring, painting, clay sculpting, jump roping etc) especially left-right movement (running, drumming, skating, hopping) can be effective at self-soothing and maintaining self-regulation in moments of distress.

#### 20. Find an expressive art and go for it.

Our emotional brain is very receptive to the creative arts, and it is a direct portal for release of feeling. Find something that is creative (sculpting, drawing, dancing, music, singing, playing) and give it your all. See how relieved you can feel. It is a very effective way of helping kids to emote and communicate as well!

## 21. Find lightness and humor in each day.

There is a lot to be worried about, and with good reason. Counterbalance this heaviness with something funny each day: cat videos on YouTube, a stand-up show on Netflix, a funny movie—we all need a little comedic relief in our day, every day.

## 22. Reach out for help—your team is there for you.

If you have a therapist or psychiatrist, they are available to you, even at a distance. Keep up your medications and your therapy sessions the best you can. If you are having difficulty coping, seek out help for the first time. There are mental health people on the ready to help you through this crisis. Your children's teachers and related service providers will do anything within their power to help, especially for those parents tasked with the difficult task of being a whole treatment team to their child with special challenges. Seek support groups of fellow home-schoolers, parents, and neighbors to feel connected. There is help and support out there, any time of the day—although we are physically distant, we can always connect virtually.

## 23. “Chunk” your quarantine, take it moment by moment.

We have no road map for this. We don't know what this will look like in 1 day, 1 week, or 1 month from now. Often, when I work with patients who have anxiety around overwhelming issues, I suggest that they engage in a strategy called “chunking”—focusing on whatever bite-sized piece of a challenge that feels manageable. Whether that be 5 minutes, a day, or a week at a time—find what feels doable for you, and set a time stamp for how far ahead in the future you will let yourself worry. Take each chunk one at a time, and move through stress in pieces.

## 24. Remind yourself daily that this is temporary.

It seems in the midst of this quarantine that it will never end. It is terrifying to think of the road stretching ahead of us. Please take time to remind yourself that although this is very scary and difficult, and will go on for an undetermined amount of time, it is a season of life and it will pass. We will return to feeling free, safe, busy, and connected in the days ahead.

## 25. Find the lesson.

This whole crisis can seem sad, senseless, and at times, avoidable. When psychologists work with trauma, a key feature to helping someone work through said trauma is to help them find their agency, the potential positive outcomes they can effect, the meaning and construction that can come out of destruction. What can each of us learn here, in big and small ways, from this crisis? What needs to change in ourselves, our homes, our communities, our nation, and our world?

## Torch-It

Torch-it device is an electronic travel aid used in conjunction with a normal white cane that assists a visually impaired person in mobility and navigation. While the normal white cane only detect obstacles up to knee/waist height, this device is capable of detecting obstacles from knee/waist to head height. In other words, the Torch-it is not meant to replace the white cane but to augment its functionality.

It can detect obstacles up to 3.2 meters when used in open areas, outdoor up to 1.3 meters, when used indoors it detects up to 0.6 meters. With this increased range, it warns the users about impending obstacles before the possible collision happens and helps in finding collision-free paths.



The Torch-it device uses ultrasonic waves to detect the presence of obstacles. These are sound waves which are not audible to human beings. The device has an ultrasonic sensor which can transmit as well as receive the ultrasonic waves. In the presence if obstacles are detected by the sensor of the device, if the obstacles from which waves are reflected lie within certain direction and distance range, a warning is issued to the user in the form of vibrations similar to a cell phone.

It is necessary for the user to grip the device in a way that the sensor is directed forward in the direction of upcoming obstacles. The Torch-it device is fitted onto top fold of white cane as and when it is necessary and can be re-attached using a simple latching mechanism.

**The benefits of using the Torch-it device are as follows:**

- It helps to detect knee/waist-above obstacles which are usually not detected by the white cane. Such obstacles might include a tree branch, underside or a car, hanging cloth strings, protruding window air conditioners, etc. As these obstacles usually pose a risk of injury to the

head and upper part of the body, it is critical to detect them early.

- It increases the detection range to 3.2 meters in the long range mode and to 0.6 meters in short-range mode. The enhanced detection range helps in informing the user about the presence of obstacles much before touching the actual obstacle. An object as big as a wall and as small as a 3-cm wide raised pipe at 3m can be detected from a mentioned distance.

- It helps in finding collision free-path while walking by detecting and avoiding obstacles.

Source: [Edit Microsystems](#)

## Birthdays



Happy birthday to Faustina Bernardo who celebrates her 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday this June

## Thank you frontline



To the medical staff, who work endless hours

To the police force, fire fighters, security and military

To the truck driver, transporting goods

To the cashier, the petrol attendant

To those taking care of feral animals

To those who tirelessly feed the poor

You make a difference; you give us hope

You keep us going

We thank you.



LONG CANE RALLY 2020 - Canceled

AGM 2020 - TBC