

“Vitamin F” Needed to Cope With COVID19

There is one vitamin that one cannot take orally but is particularly important for one’s health and coping with COVID19. It is “Vitamin F.” Well, I choose to call it a vitamin because like all nutritional vitamins, although they are taken in small dosages, they benefit the entire human body physically and emotionally. Also, the lack of vitamins can cause serious illnesses or even lead to death, similarly with this vitamin. This “vitamin” is friendship—“Vitamin F”.

During this pandemic, there is an ongoing need for everyone to have healthy meals and take vitamins, especially Vitamin C and D. However, equally important is “Vitamin F” during “COVID19. Why? Because friendship assists in keeping one healthy and boosting the immune system. A Mayo Clinic article entitled, “Friendships: Enrich Your Life and Improve Your Health,” by Mayo Clinic, states: “Friendship also plays a significant role in promoting your overall health. Adults with strong social support have a reduced risk of many significant health problems, including depression, high blood pressure and an unhealthy body mass index.”

This is why National Friendship Day in The Bahamas is so important. It is a day to remind us how vital to our physical, emotional, and national well-being it is to have friendship relationships. Friendship Day is on Wednesday, November 25, 2020. The theme is: “Be a Friend. Make a Friend.”

If there is a time that we need to maintain friendship relationships it is during COVID19. With the national protocols, lockdowns, curfews, wearing of masks, there is no emergency order preventing friendships. The only thing these orders have done is to enforce physical distance among us. Although we cannot be physically close, we can still be emotionally close, and we must. We must continue to take “Vitamin F.”

I am sure some have concerns about how to maintain or start fresh friendships when we are physical contacts are so limited. Here is an excellent point from an article entitled, “The Pandemic Has Remade Friendship” by Eva Hagberg: “Friendships involve emotional intimacy, but people have assumed that this intimacy is best mediated in space. How many times do we conclude that serious conversations need to happen in person? And yet, exercising a friendship at a distance has been possible for decades—via letters, telephone, text, Facebook, Instagram DMs, and so on. Despite the internet’s ubiquity, those options can still seem like simulacra of friendship, rather than the real thing.”

When I was a teenager our world-wide church had something called “Pen Pals.” Names of individuals with their postal addresses were published in an international magazine. Teenagers were invited to select as many individuals as possible they desired to write and establish friendships. I had about 54 “Pen Pals” from the United States, England, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, African, Philippians, and other countries. My sister, Ann Albury, had almost one hundred pen pals. We were excited when we received the snail mail four to six weeks later with pictures from our new acquaintances, information about hobbies, schoolwork, family life, etc. We developed a bond and closeness although we never spoke on the phone because it was too costly, or physically impossible to see each other. Having these pen pals motivated us, lifted our spirit, warmed our hearts, and broadened our horizons. We were close to and were proud of the distance friends.

Why then cannot we maintain and establish wholesome friendship relationships during this pandemic, in spite of the restrictions. We have more modern tools that are free to use—Messenger, FaceBook, WhatsApp, email, the telephone, etc. We do not have to depend on snail mail and wait six weeks for a response.

Two weeks ago, two of our dearest friends, a husband and wife, decided to have a Saturday hookup friendship time via live video. It was so special and invigorating. We connected. We laughed, shared stories and jokes, and caught up with family information.

Let us use this upcoming National Friendship day to remind ourselves that we can still be great friends, even though physically apart. Also, we need friendship to keep us healthy. Here is the official purpose of National Friendship Day coined by the Bahamas Friendship Council: “National Friendship Day is designed to cultivate and inspire long-term friendship relationships among the citizens and residents of The Bahamas. It is another avenue to rejuvenate a spirit of togetherness, respect for one another, unity and a healthy national pride. The goal is to develop in each individual the responsibility to restore and keep The Bahamas a friendly nation.”

Mark in your calendars Wednesday November 25, 2020 as National Friendship Day. Make it a point to call someone, deliver a hot meal, send emails, rekindle old friendships, help someone in need, etc., while still maintaining COVID19 emergency protocols.

Mayo Clinic’s article reminds us why friendship is so important during COVID 19. “Friends can help you celebrate good times and provide support during bad times. Friends prevent loneliness and give you a chance to offer needed companionship, too. Friends can also: 1) Increase your sense of belonging and purpose. 2) Boost your happiness and reduce your stress. 3) Improve your self-confidence and self-worth. 4) Help you cope with traumas, such as divorce, serious illness, job loss, or the death of a loved one. 5) Encourage you to change or avoid unhealthy lifestyle habits, such as excessive drinking or lack of exercise.

Have a wonderful National Friendship Day on Wednesday, November 25, 2020. It will be a good time to promote the importance of taking “Vitamin F.”

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