

Price of Pandemics Part 1 – Pandemic Panic

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The world is on high alert with the latest pandemic: The Stock Market, Industry, Education, Entertainment, Food Service and Travel: all are concerned. So are entire countries and their residents. The 2019-2020 Coronavirus pandemic is by no means the first nor will it be the last that Planet Earth experiences.

Fact is that sensational news “sells.” It also scares.

That’s normal.

Because some have no relevant background or experience to help them process the myriad of news releases in a logical or rational manner, they panic.

That’s normal, too.

Some lack a solid base of health knowledge that can lead to failure in applying the recommended prevention strategies daily.

Unfortunately, that’s also normal.

So, with news of the Coronavirus Pandemic (by whatever name)—which is no joke by any stretch of the imagination—many are anxious, worried, fearful. Even panicked.

The emotion of fear is a signal to alert you to danger so you can take necessary steps to keep yourself safe. (Unless it’s an imaginary fear with no real danger.) Hung onto or mismanaged, fear tends to “downshift the brain,” re-directing its energy and attention to subconscious parts of the brain where the stress responses are housed—such as Fight-Flight, Tend-Befriend, and Conserve-Withdraw. This also increases a risk for exhibiting illogical or irrational thinking, and for “shooting from the hip.” In addition, it can suppress the brain-body immune system, which is the last thing you want to happen.

Pandemics are enormously expensive in a myriad of ways: economic, pain and suffering, conflict, and bereavement. Panic is a contributor that can exacerbate all the others. As a form of fear, it, too, can downshift the brain causing individuals to make irrational—if not

dangerous—decisions. In addition, it can increase the impact of underlying chronic diseases, especially those related to the cardiovascular system. You’ve no doubt heard the expression: “Died of fear.” Panic can impact heart function.

You do need to implement recommended precautions to help keep you safe—and to help others stay safe, including pets. However, it’s best to avoid panicking.

When I was a little girl, the huge farm down the Townline from our home, raised all manner of creatures. Pigs, for one. I was afraid of the massive hogs that often looked to me like small hippopotami. The piglets were something else. I could stand by the fence watching them cavort around their pen for minutes on end, their coiled little tails bouncing like a stretch of curly ribbon—the kind my mother usually purchased, being less expensive.

I’ve also always liked nursery rhymes. “This Little Piggy” is touted as the best-known English nursery rhyme, and my mother used it as a fingerplay as well as a toe play with my baby brother. Reportedly, the first full version of the rhyme appeared in 1760 in *The Famous Tommy Thumb's Little Story-Book*. It goes like this:

*This little piggy went to market
This little piggy stayed home
This little piggy ate roast beef
This little piggy had none, and
This little piggy cried wee-wee-wee
All the way home*

Naturally, I had no idea what “market” signified.

I think of Proactive, Prudent, and Preventive as three little piglets. I can see them in my mind’s eye, all scrubbed clean and pink, each wearing a tiny harness with its name engraved in large gold letters. So cute on such little creatures!

More importantly, their names remind me to do *whatever* I can to stay safe day after day without becoming ongoingly fearful, downshifting my brain, and suppressing my immune system.

So, be *proactive*, *prudent*, and *preventive*, building good protective habits and using them for the rest of your life. (Especially handwashing!)

Avoid *panic*. And guess what? You, too, can stay healthy—and safe.

Is there a difference between an epidemic and a pandemic? Check that out in Part 2.