

Seniors Say: Covid opens new worlds through Zoom, more time for artist, passion for green in Woodacre, but little change for â??homebodyâ?•

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Leigh McLellan,70, Inner Sunset



The COVID crisis is definitely a case of life giving us lemons. However, thanks to Zoom, a lot of lemonade is happening, too, and I am participating in things I might not have done otherwise.

Next Monday evening I am reading a part in a play on Drama with Friends. My part is Grace, a crabby old lady. Perfect for me!!! The two other women in the play are well cast and we had a great time rehearsing last Monday. In the final play, we must try not to laugh and smile at each otherâ??s performances!

Iâ??ve also decided to revive some neglected skills, this writing class (Writing for Remembering) being one of them. Fifteen minutes of in-class writing is just right for me and I love listening to the amazing

pieces that my group mates write.

In my 20s I was an art student, so, now in my 70s, I have located some figure drawing groups. One uses a model who makes a little money with a 3-hour drawing class. I draw about half the time and rest up in between. Drawing takes a lot of energy!

Last Sunday, I joined SF Sketchers, a meetup group for all levels of ability. We each posed, took screen shots of the poses, and then spent an hour and a half drawing whatever poses we wanted. At the end we all got a chance to share. What fun it was! And I am gratified to find that my drawing abilities still exist after rusting for so long.

So the COVID crisis has eliminated many things dear to me, like seeing friends, going to restaurants and live performances, exercise classes, and most importantly, visits from my beloved niece who must stay in Taiwan for the school semester. But it has also opened up a whole new world conveniently right in my apartment and, in addition, has given me a new appreciation for haircuts and teeth cleanings.

Jennifer Ewing, 71, Mission District

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I am a 71-year-old lifetime artist who lives in an artist community where you can find both my living and studio space. This has been a real haven for me these past months with lots of art supplies at hand ready to put to good use.

My routine has changed radically and for the better if you look at it through a lens of creativity and imagination. I have more time for my art but I miss my part-time work in museum education. Now there is the chance to do a bit of zoom teaching for the museum and extend my work into remote learning. I am surprised by how well my workshops are being received.

In March, I began new practice that has helped me through grief for the loss of my job and our common loss of what we considered the norm. I committed to a self-directed series of arks to symbolize our common shelter-in-place existence.

Each day I made one ark and posted it on FaceBook so people could follow me and make comments. This was exciting and supercharged my time on social media. Some days it was a lot to handle and I wondered how I could keep up this demanding challenge. But because I wanted to explore different and fresh ways of working, novel approaches helped keep me on track.

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Each week I used a different media to carry the messages that an ark can convey. Through drawing, painting, collage, iPad sketches and even a game board, I would show different aspects of this historic and mysterious vessel.



My drawing skills improved greatly and that gave me more confidence. It was a great time to experiment and let go of outcomes.

Most everyone understands the legend of Noahâ??s Ark and how that preserved life on our planet. In this series, I deliberately did not get involved in religious beliefs or animal counts. My intention was to keep a focus on the abstract idea of an Ark, so it could become more playful yet a gateway to deeper questions. This practice lasted for 11 weeks until early June.

I am surprised that I was able to carry off this work and that other things would also become easier because of this commitment to explore arks. For example, I have been getting out of bed earlier with a heightened sense of purpose. Gratitude has been building in me ever since I began and there is a rising desire to share more.

This has been a tremendous time of self-reflection. I have learned to be more in the now and let go of a lot of the past. Now I focus on the most vital and meaningful pieces of my life to sustain my well-being, my outlook and inspiration/imagination through all the current chaos and beyond.

Joe Kerr, 74, Woodacre

These are strange times, particularly for seniors. Despite our age and regular routines, we suddenly find ourselves making changes in our lives. Of course, we seniors are just the host that this virus is looking for. As a result, we become more isolated than ever. No nonessential trips.





As always, one tries to find the silver lining, even in trying times like these. I find myself getting more deeply into the things Iâ??ve been doing. I guess from my working days I learned to put yourself 100% into what youâ??re doing and then time flies by. Iâ??ve been putting a whole lot more time into my garden and with a lot more passion. Suddenly Iâ??m interested in having lots of plants around me, both inside the house and out on my deck. Theyâ??ve become my friends. I talk to them. They say that will make them grow even better.

Sometimes we donâ??t realize what our behaviors are until we have to change them. The biggest change for me during this pandemic is my loss of spontaneity. I realize that as a retired single senior, I donâ??t spend a lot of time planning things. Rather if I feel like doing something, I do it. Suddenly, I canâ??t do that. Now I do have to plan what Iâ??m doing and limit my trips to essential needs only. I never realized how much spontaneity was a part of my life.

In fact, it turns out, Iâ??ve been living my life in a spontaneous way for sometime without realizing. As I said earlier, sometimes we donâ??t know what our behaviors are until we have to change them. I guess, Iâ??ve learned a lot of things about myself during this incredible situation. Certainly nothing Iâ??ve seen before in my 74 years. So one of the things Iâ??ve learned, is whatever youâ??re doing during this, do it with passion. Throw yourself 100 percent into it and make time fly by.

Larry Boysen, 77, San Francisco

I am a San Francisco Native, a Calvary Church and Senior Group member. Being a homebody, itâ??s not been much of a major adjustment I have plenty to keep me busy, like my workshop projects â?? I just finished restoring a 1908 Edison cylinder phonograph â?? keeping up my music practice and work around the house. Iâ??m one of the very fortunate ones, as I have my own home and do not have eviction or school children worries. I go out to food shop and walk in the neighborhood. Thatâ??s about it. Of course I miss the social contact of Calvary, but I watch the Sunday Sermons on line.

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