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## In This Issue

**6 Obsessively Attached?** ..... Tara Richardson  
**13 Travelling in a Pandemic** ..... Sam Burton  
**18 For the Love of Books** ..... Sarah Malik

**Regular Features**  
**19 Winter Events Calendar**  
**20 At The Box Office** ..... Stephanie Herrera  
**21 Soul Searching** ..... Tara Richardson  
**22 Get Fit: Inside & Out** ..... Bianca Schaefer  
**23 Tweens, Teens & In-Between** ..... Sarah Malik  
**24 Family Matters** ..... Josie Myers  
**25 A Forkful of Healthy** ..... Wendy Lee  
**26 Finance & Real Estate Insights** ..... Nicole Forrester  
**27 Ask Sue-Ann** ..... Sue-Ann Bavinka  
**28 The Coach Corner** ..... Malachi Brown  
**29 The Golden Years** ..... Linda Calder  
**30 Horoscope** ..... Julie Antoinette



## From the Publisher

It's hard to believe that the year is almost over. What a year it has been! There's no doubt that 2020 will be a year to remember in the history books. Speaking of books, have you rekindled your relationship with books this year? I know many people who have started reading again during this pandemic. It's interesting, that one of the upsides of this pandemic is that it has made many of us slow down, to take a look at our lives, and to reflect. To do the things that perhaps we've always wanted to do but have put on the back burner because we may not have had time for it in our usual "always on the go" busy lives. Writer Sarah Malik talks about the joys (and benefits!) of reading books in her article, *For the Love of Books*. She also has some useful suggestions for holiday gift ideas for the book lovers in your life.

The downside of the coronavirus pandemic of course, is that traveling has come to a screeching halt. Driving by Pearson International Airport, it feels like a ghost town. Very few planes are taking off and/or landing. Where once the airports would be a flurry of activity with people flying to visit their loved ones at Christmas time, this year will likely be a different story. Writer Sam Burton takes a look back over the past few months at how COVID-19 significantly impacted the travel industry, what things are like now, and where we likely will be in the coming months. Her article, *Travelling in a Pandemic*, is a must-read for any would-be travellers, as well as anyone wanting to understand the devastating impacts the coronavirus has had on the industry.

I hope you enjoy reading these feature articles, as well as our regular columns in this Winter 2020 issue. Feel free to share your thoughts on it with us. Don't forget to also connect with us through our website [www.thelocalbizmagazine.ca](http://www.thelocalbizmagazine.ca) and [Facebook page](#).

**Antoine Elhashem**  
**Publisher**





## From the Editor

This New Year's Eve will be much more significant for human beings collectively all over the world. Our shared experience globally with the coronavirus has made 2020 a year to remember. Looking back, who would have ever thought we would be wearing masks practically everywhere we go, washing our hands and using hand sanitizer with such frequency, and thinking twice about shaking another person's hands or hugging them. The words "quarantine" and "self-isolation" have become part of our vocabulary, as well as the phrase "stay 2 metres apart".

It's easy to look back over the year and remember how coronavirus ruined a lot of the things I had planned. However, I've realized there is a positive that came out of this too. For me, it's been the "us time" I've had on weekends with my husband and kids. Pre-COVID, I wasn't a fan of weekends if we had no plans. But when social gatherings were nixed back in March, a wonderful thing happened. Our family found ways to enjoy our time together. We went for family walks, we explored trails in Durham Regional Forest, we went for scenic drives / mini road trips etc. While we partook in some of these activities pre-COVID, there was something different about it this time around. Our mindset! It was as though knowing we could only be in the company of each other made us appreciate the moments we were spending together even more.

A few days ago, I came across a phrase that really stuck with me – control the controllables. Coronavirus is something we can't control and are forced to deal with. But what was controllable in 2020 (and will still be controllable in 2021) is, our perspective, our actions, our words and our thoughts. So, as we say goodbye to 2020 and embark on 2021, let's try to remember that we can't always control what happens in the world around us; the only thing we can control is ourselves. And that, is very empowering to know. If you struggle with control issues, check out Tara Richardson's article, *Obsessively Attached? You Might Be Codependent*. The title says it all.

**Wendy Chiavalon**  
Editor-in-Chief



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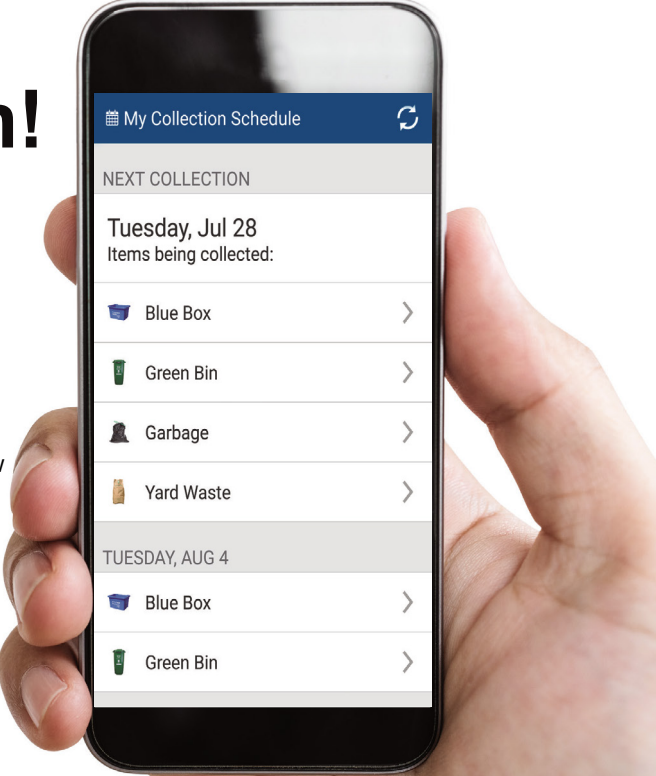
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# OBSESSIVELY Attached? YOU MIGHT BE CODEPENDENT

by Tara Richardson

**The term ‘codependent’ was popularized in 1986 through Melody Beattie’s best-selling book *Codependent No More*. Codependency was a word used to describe partners of alcoholic loved ones who were overly fixated on supporting and caring for their unwell partner, often ignoring their own needs and wants to preserve the relationship.**

Since 1986, the definition of codependency has expanded to describe any relationship where an individual places extreme value on taking care of a specific person at the cost of not taking care of themselves in the process. This includes parent-child relationships, other familial relationships, romantic relationships, and friendships.

## Signs and Symptoms of Codependency

Codependency can be easily missed at first glance because the signs and symptoms may not be glaringly obvious indicators of a problem. After all, isn’t it a good thing to want to take care of our loved ones? However, over time, codependent behaviours can overwhelm the relationship leading to tension and resentment from both parties. You may be codependent if you:

- Have a hard time saying no
- Have poor boundaries
- Show emotional reactivity
- Feel compelled to take care of people
- Have a need for control, especially over others
- Have trouble communicating honestly
- Fixate on mistakes
- Feel a need to be liked by everyone
- Feel a need to always be in a relationship
- Deny one’s own needs, thoughts, and feelings

## Causes of Codependency

Codependency gets a bad rap but at the very core of codependency is intense love. It is because of this love that codependent individuals become lost in the caretaking relationship. Others typically do not understand the codependent individual, using labels like “enabler” and “compulsive”. What people don’t realize is that being codependent is often the outcome of negative or insecure childhood attachment. Many people who struggle with codependency have also battled through dysfunctional family situations as children - facing extreme stress, mental or physical illness, addiction, even emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. When you consider the impact that such significant events have on children, it makes sense that a child may develop codependent tendencies as a result of these experiences.

Although codependency is not considered a mental illness on its own in the DSM-V, the symptoms of codependency can overlap with diagnoses of mental illness, particularly the diagnoses of Dependent Personality Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder.

Dependent Personality Disorder (DPD) is characterized by a pervasive, excessive need to be taken care of, leading to submissiveness and clinging behaviors. The main difference between codependency and DPD is that a codependent individual is hyper fixated on a specific person, whereas those with DPD have overly dependent relationships in general.

Individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) tend to exhibit extreme levels of emotional instability and dysregulation, often leading to harmful impulsive behaviours. They fear abandonment from loved ones and will often become codependent to avoid abandonment.

Regardless of whether there is a mental illness diagnosis, being codependent can be exhausting and may wreak havoc on relationships.

## Codependency in Romantic Relationships

At the core of healthy romantic relationships is balance, where both partners feel like they are giving and taking in harmony with each other. Contrary to the popular quote from the movie *Jerry Maguire* (“You complete me”), it is more important to recognize that you are whole just as you are – with or without a partner. Lack of self-esteem and self-worth can contribute to codependent behaviours.

If you answer “yes” to any of the questions below, then you may be in a codependent romantic relationship.

1. Are you unable to find satisfaction in your life outside of a specific person?
2. Do you recognize unhealthy behaviors in your partner but stay with him or her in spite of them?
3. Are you giving support to your partner at the cost of your own mental, emotional, and physical health?

4. Have you desired more independence in your relationship, but feel conflicted and anxious whenever you attempt to separate in any way?
5. Do you spend a lot of time and energy either trying to change your partner, or, trying to conform to your partner’s wishes?

Keep in mind that if you have been in a relationship for a long time, you may have some of these signs but would not necessarily be considered codependent. For example, if you are getting a divorce after 25+ years, it makes sense that you would feel conflicted and anxious about being on your own after sharing so much time with a loved one. Parsing out your feelings and reflecting truthfully with a trusted friend or health professional can be helpful in identifying codependent relationships.

## Impacts of Codependency

On the surface, codependent behaviours may appear to be loving and helpful, but upon closer inspection it becomes apparent that the codependent individual is overly invested in a loved one’s life. The codependent individual struggles with expressing their own needs and so both their mental and physical health will deteriorate as their own needs remain unmet. They can exhaust themselves by lacking boundaries and following through on whatever is asked of them. And when they cannot follow through or “fix” something, they may feel an inordinate amount of guilt. For example, a codependent parent may become so enmeshed in their children’s lives that when the child becomes an adult, the codependent parent becomes overbearing with their urgency to fix.

Codependent individuals become so fixated on their loved one that they are unable to maintain relationships with others, losing friends and family in the process.

The sad irony is that many people develop codependency while caring for their loved ones with addictions, but codependent individuals are also more likely to develop addictions themselves, likely from feeling anxious and not in control.

## Recovering from Codependency

### Codependents Anonymous

Like *Alcoholics Anonymous*, *Codependents Anonymous* (CoDA) is a 12-step faith-based recovery program where, instead of abstaining from alcohol, CoDA focuses on interrupting codependent behaviours to help individuals foster healthier relationships. For more information and to find a meeting that best suits your needs – CoDA offers in-person, virtual, and phone support – their website has a plethora of resources available. [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org)

### Family Therapy

Many codependent individuals have had a difficult childhood or dysfunctional family dynamics. Children may observe codependent behaviours between family members and model these behaviours. It is in our childhood that we form beliefs about how we “should” feel and behave. These beliefs may be distorted but can carry with a person for their entire life if not addressed.





Many types of therapy, most notably Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), focus on shifting distorted core beliefs to allow for a more balanced outlook on the world, others, and the self.

A family therapist can help open the dialogue between family members while in a supportive, nonjudgmental environment. They can help the family as a unit process emotion in a healthy, balanced way. Family therapy can also provide the therapist with different narratives from each family member, as opposed to hearing one-sided versions of a story. The therapist can then point out any patterns in family dynamics that the family may not have noticed already and suggest ways to function in healthier ways.

### Individual or Group Therapy

As mentioned earlier, codependent individuals are likely to have overlapping mental health diagnoses, such as anxiety, depression, and personality disorders. Individual or group therapy can be remarkably effective for improving these symptoms and codependent behaviours. Many hospital-based mental health programs within Ontario are group-based to reach as many individuals as possible in order to prevent lengthier wait lists. Most individual therapists work in private practice and come with a hefty price tag, however, there are some community organizations that offer a fixed amount of sessions for reduced cost based on patient income.

### Self-Help

*Practice self-care.* Many people do not understand just how important self-care is to our wellbeing. The basics of self-care include getting enough sleep, eating regularly and healthily, moving your body, but self-care also goes beyond the basics; are you nourishing your mind and soul?

*Develop decision making strategies.* It is not just codependent individuals who struggle with making decisions. Not wanting to make decisions can stem from worrying you will make the wrong choice or that others will disprove of your choices. If you have been over-reliant on others for some time, it may be easier to start with smaller decisions and build up. (And if you choose pizza but you find out later that your partner would have preferred Chinese food- there's always next time!)

*Understand your past.* As mentioned earlier, people with unstable or chaotic childhoods are more likely to be codependent. Working through past trauma or negative experiences can be incredibly insightful. There are many self-help workbooks available to assist you in the healing process.

*Practice self-compassion.* Directly connected to understanding your past is to be kind to yourself. Nobody consciously chooses that they will be codependent or have mental illness; it is not your fault. While it's important to take personal responsibility and recognize you need to change, keep in mind that pretty much no one hates themselves into a person they want to be. Be as kind to yourself as you would be to a good friend when making these changes.

*Find hobbies and interests outside the relationship.* Codependency thrives on making your life small and insignificant. You may realize that you don't even know what hobbies or interests you have anymore. That's okay! It just means that you will need to



explore current interests. It may be helpful to reflect on hobbies you have enjoyed in the past.

*Learn to express your own wants and needs to others.* If you struggle to express yourself to others, this can be difficult, yet vital. After suppressing your wants and needs for a long time it can be hard to even identify that you have them. Pay close attention and remember that your wants and needs are just as valuable as others.

### Helping Others

It is easier for outsiders to notice symptoms of codependent relationships before the individuals in the relationship themselves. Here are some tips for helping loved ones involved in a codependent relationship with you or others.

*Set clear boundaries.* Boundaries are about setting limits that you feel comfortable with. For example, if you are receiving 7 calls in one hour from a codependent loved one then it is important to express what you are willing to accept. And even more important, it is critical to maintain these boundaries.

*Understand that codependency is an extreme version of empathy.* Understanding that people are feeling so deeply can flip the judgments you may have for the codependent individual. Imagine if you walked around with your heart full of everyone's problems all the time. And remember that empathy also needs boundaries. Encourage loved ones to redirect their empathy to a

cause that will benefit rather than a particular individual. Volunteering can provide an outlet to pour empathy and passion into.

*Avoid judgments.* Consider how you approach the subject of codependency. Casting judgments does not typically work well in the favour of changing behaviour. Consider the 'Romeo and Juliet Effect', an aptly named psychological concept where you unwittingly push the person away even further by verbalizing your disapproval. Tread carefully and point out facts instead of judgments.

*Encourage your codependent loved ones to seek psychological support.* Codependency can be complicated by past trauma and mental illness. Seeking psychological support may be necessary to overcome these symptoms and a psychiatrist may prescribe psychotropic medication as part of the treatment plan.

Codependency is not a life sentence! With insight, dedication, and effort, you can overcome codependent tendencies and live a happy and meaningful life.

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Tara Richardson is a wellness blogger, whose personal experience with mental illness has inspired her to dedicate her life to helping others heal and live a full, flourishing life.





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## Travelling in a Pandemic

by Sam Burton

### As 2019 rolled into 2020 at midnight, no one was considering whether or not they should hug their friends.

We drank from cups that a stranger served us, we climbed into Ubers and rubbed our eyes without a second thought. Some of us dealt with that Canadian chill the traditional way, bundling up and heading into bars and night clubs with a mass of strangers hoping to distract from the cold. Others jetted off into an entirely new climate, celebrating the gifts the new year would offer. None of us knew what that new year was going to bring us a reality—an unprecedented challenge that generations had yet to face.

### The Downfall

The novel coronavirus crept slowly into the collective awareness of Canadians in late January. Most Canadians had heard about this new virus beginning to spread in China when Chinese Health Officials informed the *World Health Organization* (WHO) about a cluster of 41 patients with strange pneumonia. Much of this information was learned of in passing, still seen as a problem in a

distant country. The outbreak continued to make its way across the world; the virus carried in the bodies of unknowing travellers. We watched the news, believing the crisis would maintain its limited presence outside of North America. We watched dystopian nightmares play out in front of us in the form of cruise ship outbreaks, particularly that of the luxury *Diamond Princess*, floating in Japanese waters due to a positive case announced February 1. Although the very first case in Canada made its way to Toronto from Wuhan, Hubei, China and tested positive on an individual on January 27, 2020, it wasn't until late February and early March that panic began to set in.

A sense of alarm spread through the entire country as horrific news stories blasted our social media platforms 24/7. Fear of the virus, as well as a complete economic and societal shutdown, forced people into grocery stores, clutching items like toilet paper, cleansers and hand sanitizer. Industries that involved a high level of contact waited in nervous anticipation to hear about the fate of their business, and thus, the future of their jobs.

The inevitable arrived between March 12 to 20, each province declaring a state of emergency. All non-essential services closed down, leaving many without jobs and the ability to pay their bills. The *Canadian Emergency Response Benefit* (CERB) allowed for \$2,000 a month for up to four months for those who lost their job, were sick, quarantined, or taking care of someone with COVID-19, or a person who needed to stay home and take care of their children on April 6. Several others were given a moratorium on





bills, student loans, and debts were announced in early April. Within the first week of CERB, 3.5 million Canadians had applied for this benefit.

This challenge was keenly unprecedented for the Canadian economy, as it was for every country in the world. Large scale events set to take place in 2020 were all cancelled, including sports events, concerts, and associated artistic events. The agricultural sector feared bankruptcy due to a shortage of labour. Casinos and lottery terminals were ordered to close in March until further notice. The most significant single-day decline of the Toronto Stock Exchange since 1940 occurred in March of 2020. The closure of non-essential stores restricted businesses to running only online, and the strong social distancing rules implemented in grocery stores and pharmacies altered consumer behaviour. Panic buying left many shelves empty, causing economic as well as emotional stress to both the shoppers and store owners. Essentially, none of us knew what we were doing, and most of our actions were driven by fear of this unknown virus.

## Airline Travel

Canada's tourism and air travel sectors were hit particularly hard due to the severe travel restrictions that arrived with the emergency lockdown of the country. On March 18, *Air Canada* announced that by April 1, all international flights would be suspended, with only six overseas airports and thirteen United States airports being served. The connections were at London, Paris, Frankfurt, Delhi, Tokyo and Hong Kong, which would allow for only Canadians to return home.

Other airlines implemented similar restrictions in congruence with government sanctions; *WestJet* announced March 16 that all international flights, including to the United States, will be suspended by March 22; *Porter Airlines* would suspend all flights until June. These restrictions also meant immense job loss; *WestJet* froze all hiring in March, offering voluntary departure packages to employees to cut 12 percent of its total capacity. *Air Canada* laid off 5,000 members of its staff. The use of hotels plunged 57% according to a report filed by *Destination Canada*. Anything that involved travelling, whether it be domestically or internationally, for business reasons or pleasure was going to hit

the Canadian economy hard. That same report projected a worst-case scenario number of tourism spending losses in Canada, which amounted to 33% of all spending, or \$27 billion.

Fear and anxiety were common emotions during the sudden outbreak. People who chose not to travel were weary of interacting with anyone who travelled. A sensation of uncertainty ran through the hearts of every Canadian, including Canadians who had made plans for the March break—many plans that were indefinitely cancelled, altered, or abandoned during an unprecedented health crisis.

## The Current State: Autumn of 2020

The first few months of the pandemic in Canada were a terrifying blur. Canadians were asked to stay put, to hold off all non-essential travel for the foreseeable future. Most did, which aided in the decrease of reported cases during the summer, along with strict social distancing in stores, bars and restaurants during the implementation of the third stage between June and July across the country.

As of October 2020, Canadians can choose from nearly 50 international destinations that aren't requiring travellers from Canada to quarantine upon arrival. Canadians are seen as desirable tourists, unlike the United States, whose number of deaths due to COVID-19 continue to rise steadily. Their countries are discounting fees for flights and hotels to regain the influx of tourism that was lost in the earlier months of 2020. Many tourists looking to save a buck have noted satisfying their wanderlust impulses through the exploration of many notable cities, the experience being highlighted even more due to the severely diminished number of tourists. Forty-percent of all destinations worldwide have eased travel restrictions as of July, according to the *United Nations World Tourism Organization*, while the rest remain closed to tourists. *Air Transat* resumed its operations as of July 23, but with a reduction in routes to Europe, sunny vacation destination, and three American cities.

## Travel in 2021

The Canadian government has not changed its advisory, issued on March 19, that all Canadians should avoid travel outside of the country. They are also continuing to advise those itching to travel to stay well versed in the constant changes and restrictions that are required upon entry to each country. The government suggests doing the research beforehand, and asking oneself the following questions:

- Is the country overwhelmed with COVID?
- Is the health-care system overwhelmed?



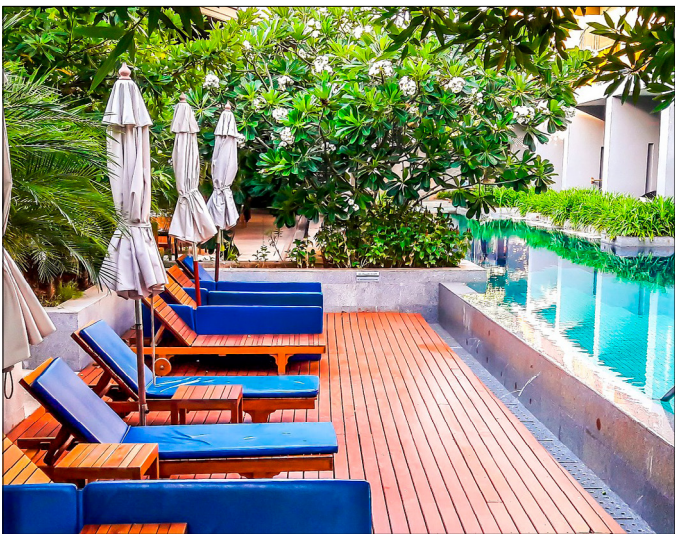
- Would you get access to adequate care if you or a loved one were to contract COVID?
- What are the quarantine requirements?
- Will you be stuck in a hotel room?
- Will the trip be worth it despite all of these restrictions?

Other warnings from the government involve a possible sudden change in restrictions. This means that you may be required to stay out of the country longer than you expected due to the virus' sensitivity and constant presence. "If you choose to travel despite these advisories, be aware that commercial airspace closures and movement restrictions can occur without warning and could prevent your return to Canada. The Government of Canada is not planning additional facilitated flights to bring Canadians home during the COVID-19 pandemic."

A professor of tourism management at the University of Guelph admits that it is still only an advisory, not a prohibition. Canadians can always travel, as previously mentioned, to many other countries internationally. The Canada-US land border is closed to non-essential travel however, Canadians can still fly there. Flying there though is generally limited to essential travel for trade and commerce. "We aren't prisoners in our country. But when you come back, you must self-isolate. That's the only stick."

The rules pertaining to isolation and quarantine upon returning to Canada are incredibly strict, and have been so since the pandemic hit in March. According to [canada.ca](https://canada.ca), every person who enters Canada during this time has to by law, quarantine themselves for a 14-day period. Everyone entering Canada has to quarantine, not just people with visual symptoms of COVID, but even those with no symptoms at all. If you are a Canadian citizen who at some point travelled out of the country after early March, you are required to isolate yourself, beginning the day you re-enter Canada. You are required to also wear a mask when you are in transit to your place of isolation, unless within your own private vehicle. If a person is asymptomatic, they must monitor themselves for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 until the expiring of the 14-day period. If they do develop symptoms during this time, they must get tested, and if they are COVID positive, reset isolation to a 14-day period once more. Isolation itself means exactly what it sounds like—you cannot leave your place of residence, nor interact with people who do not live outside your home.

Things on the American side are slightly different. Canadian air passengers can still enter the country as long as they haven't visited Brazil, China, Iran, Ireland, the UK, or countries in the Schengen Area for 14 days before. And depending upon which state you enter, you may not need to self-isolate upon arrival. But once again, upon returning home, you must self-isolate for 14 days, no matter what.



In general, if Canadians are dedicated to travelling, they must always be ready to change their plans, both in practicality and in activities, as countries go through their second and third waves of the virus. The European Union is reviewing its list of safe countries every two weeks. Another example of the continually shifting landscape of travel is the situation in the Bahamas, which opened to international tourism in July, then changed course a few weeks later when COVID cases skyrocketed. The Bahamas banned all international commercial flights July 22 but exempted travellers from Canada, the UK, and the European Union who tested negative. As of August 1, all visitors must submit a health visa for approval and adhere to a 14-day quarantine upon arrival.

The federal government says it will continue to adjust border restrictions as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, but Chandra said it won't stop Canadians from travelling. "Canada can never stop citizens from leaving the country, and of course citizens are allowed to come back by definition... and while they may feel more comfortable travelling now, there's still policies in place they have to follow," he said.

It is difficult to say for sure what the nature of travel will be like in 2021—but it is obvious that rapid testing is needed. A deal was signed in September 2020 with *Abbott Diagnostics* in the United States to purchase 7.8 million ID Now tests, which can produce results on the spot in under 15 minutes. Tourism officials believe that rapid tests and results, as well as improved contact tracing could help ease Canada's current 14-day quarantine period law, which they believe is a significant deterrent to travel. This, along with the perceived health risk in planes are two barriers that have negatively affected travel since March. Removing these two barriers is vital to stimulating the travel industry.

Uncertainty has been the theme of 2020, but with the new information gathered about COVID, it is likely that the new year will bring with it, some light to shine on that darkness of mystery.

Sam Burton is a writer in the GTA with a focus on creative fiction but with an affinity for local and broader investigative journalism. Currently residing in Pickering, her striving goal in writing is to create a genuine connection with readers, whether it be through real-world events or those crafted from her own musings. Her photography portfolio can be found on [instagram @typhoidandswans](https://www.instagram.com/typhoidandswans).



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# For the Love of Books

by Sarah Malik

**Growing up, I always carried a book with me wherever I went. Even if I did not plan on reading that day, I liked knowing that I had it with me in case.**

As someone who was shy growing up, reading was an escape from the pressures of socialization. It meant that I could travel to distant lands and embody the characters that most inspired me. I got very attached to these characters and their stories opened my eyes to see the world in another light. Even now, every book I read leaves me with a different perspective of my place in the world. Each one teaches me about different lifestyles, cultures, and struggles that I never would have known otherwise.

Reading came very natural to me. Almost every book I read was one that I loved. However, the more books I read the higher my expectations grew. I started sticking to the same genre – dystopian fiction – each time I looked for a new book. It came to a point where every time I tried to read; I would feel as if the words just would not reach my brain. For a while I gave up on books and instead moved on to movies and TV shows. I soon realized that many of the movies that I watched were based off novels, some of which I had never even heard of. My own curiosity led me to reading those books for the sole purpose of finding the differences between the movie and the book. Movies allowed me to become absorbed in the pictures, the costumes, and the acting, but the books allowed me to truly relish in the actual details of the stories. Reading made me appreciate the films more because I could imagine the stories on screen and appreciate certain details in the films better. This helped me get back into

reading because I was able to explore new genres and types of books and move on to ones that better suited my interest.

## Too Busy to Read?

When I was younger I had so much more time to read. Now, with school and work online, my schedule is a lot busier. Usually when I work, I try to schedule some breaks throughout the day. But during these breaks, I often went on my phone to watch Netflix. I realized I was spending my entire day in front of a screen. So, I started reaching for my books during my breaks. Not only did they keep me away from the pitfalls of social media, but they also gave my eyes a much-needed break from the screen.

## So Many Choices!

The great thing about books is that there is almost always something for everyone. There are many different genres of books: fiction, nonfiction, horror, mystery, fantasy, adventure and many more. Recently I have been reading a lot of classics, such as *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Beautiful and the Damned*. These books give me a look into life in the past and their themes are often super relevant in today's time. I also love reading memoirs. Personal stories give me strength and courage - especially when I can relate to the authors.

Books can take on many formats. There are hardcovers, audiobooks, eBooks — to name a few. I prefer paper books because they allow me to take a break from my screens. However, I also know many people who prefer to read on a device because it saves them from having to carry around multiple items. It's all about what works for you!

## Book Shopping

Going to the bookstore is one of my favourite things to do. I cannot resist the urge to go inside and look around. Most of the time, I find books from the library. But when I find a book I like to read on repeat, I like to get a copy of my own. If you are looking for holiday gifts this season, consider buying a book! I truly believe they are a kind of gift that can last a lifetime. When I reminisce on a book, I read a while ago, I don't just remember the book itself. I remember the excitement I felt when I first opened it up and flipped through the pages, the tissues that piled up after my favourite character died, the bittersweet turn of the last page, and the feeling of joy when finding someone else who has read it too.

When I am buying books, I try to look through thrift stores for used copies. You can usually find like-new books for great prices. I am also always on the lookout for sales. It's a good idea to follow your favourite local bookstore on social media. This can help keep you up to date with any promotion.

With the current COVID pandemic, shopping online for books might be a more appealing option if you are weary of going into a bookstore. *Chapters Indigo* and *Amazon* tend to be the go-to for online book purchases, however, some local bookstores and authors may also offer an online purchase option. Consider too, buying digital copies of your book for your phone or tablet. This can be both environmentally friendly, and convenient for reading on the go!

## Books and the Brain

Besides the benefits that reading has on our social and emotional lives, reading has many positive effects on our brains. According to a medium.com article, *The Reading Brain (Why Your Brain Needs You to Read Every Day)*, reading is an active and engaging process

that exercises our comprehension skills and helps us become better problem solvers. It increases our attention span and helps us better focus on our everyday tasks. Put simply, reading is to the mind, what exercise is to our bodies. Reading also makes us better writers and helps us become more aware of our surroundings. I give credit to my love of books, for influencing my love of writing.

Reading is one of those activities that can help you in so many aspects of your life – through improved socialization, brain function, mental wellness, and happiness. For a shy person like me, it gave me ways to connect to other people. Many people share a love of books and meeting these people brought out my energy and sociability. Reading also helped me by showing me characters that I could relate to. Seeing characters that I identified with, take on new challenges and overcome their fears inspired me to do the same. I have become more confident in myself - a big part of which is due to the lessons I learned from my books. I truly believe reading is something that more people should partake in and explore! This holiday season, why not take a break from the screens and immerse yourself in a world of books. You may be surprised at what you discover, and your brain will thank you for it!

Sarah Malik is a first-year student at the University of Waterloo. She is studying Honours Arts with a major in Social Development and Legal Studies.





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Usually, our Events calendar is filled with event listings. Unfortunately, this year, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many events have either been postponed or cancelled altogether. Although things are starting to return to some sort of normalcy, there is still a lot of uncertainty in the air. As a result, some events are now taking place virtually instead of in-person. Below, is a listing of events originally planned for the months of December, January and February in Durham Region. While we are optimistic that these events do continue as planned, we suggest you contact the event organizer directly to determine the status of the event.

In the event that social distancing is still being advised, here is a wonderful link that suggests ways you can keep yourself entertained. This listing includes museum tours, virtual tours, animal fun, educational resources and more!

Visit [www.braininjurycanada.ca/ideas-social-distancing/](http://www.braininjurycanada.ca/ideas-social-distancing/)

#### November 14 to December 13, 2020

##### Christmas Drive-Thru Tours

Visit the museum this holiday season and experience the spirit of Christmas through the brand new Christmas Drive-Thru Tour. Journey back through the years to learn how our popular Christmas traditions started. Hear how Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer came to be and when his Christmas carol first started. End your tour with a safe-distanced visit with Santa Claus! Tickets are timed entry, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Tour time is approximately 35 minutes. Pre-registration required. Cost per vehicle is \$20 plus tax.  
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#### November 28, 2020

##### Santa Claus Drive-Thru Parade

The Kinsmen & Kinette Club of Pickering presents the new Santa Claus Drive-Thru Parade: "Santa At The Drive-In". To watch the parade, register at [pickering.ca/greatevents](http://pickering.ca/greatevents).  
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#### December 31, 2020

##### Oshawa Celebrates 2021

Celebrate the New Year with free skates and swims, crafts, animal displays, jumping castles and live entertainment.  
 Oshawa  
[www.oshawa.ca](http://www.oshawa.ca)

For events that may have been added after the publication date and other ideas to plan your perfect day in Durham Region, visit [www.durhamtourism.ca](http://www.durhamtourism.ca).



# AT THE BOX OFFICE

by Stephanie Herrera



We've put together a blend of streaming and in-theatre movies for people interested in enjoying a night out or for those wanting to stay in!

## Action & Adventure

Ryan Reynolds stars in a comedy action movie called *Free Guy* hitting the theatres December 11<sup>th</sup>. Reynolds plays "Guy," a gentle bank teller who works at the "Free Bank." He soon discovers that he is actually living inside a video game and he decides to turn the tables and become a hero. With a mentor in "Molotov Girl," played by Jodie Comer, and a barrage of comical villains (including Taika Waititi) this movie is filled with a lot of humour and A LOT of action.

## Dramas & Thrillers

If you like heartfelt movies and you like Rock and Roll, *Sound Of Metal* is a must-see for you. Inspired by true events, this story centres on a punk metal drummer, played by Riz Ahmed, whose life unravels when he suddenly loses his hearing and with that, his very identity. A powerful story on starting over, discovery of self, and love, this movie is unique with its largely deaf cast and blend of punk with stillness and silence. An Amazon original, the film will have a limited release and will be available on Prime Video December 4<sup>th</sup>.

A film that has been called a "delicious new take on revenge," *Promising Young Woman* stars Carey Mulligan, a young woman who seeks vengeance on men who take advantage of inebriated women at bars and the people who don't believe the victims. A slick, sexy movie, that holds up a mirror to a culture that protects men who have been accused for fear they might "ruin a man's life." Some well-known actors round out the cast including Alison Brie, Bo Burnham, Molly Shannon, Adam Brody, and Max Greenfield. The tables are turned on December 25<sup>th</sup>.

## For the whole family

From the mind behind the TV show "Glee" comes *The Prom* on Netflix on December 11<sup>th</sup>. Based on real events, this movie centres on a small town where a young lesbian is told she will not be able to attend the prom with her girlfriend. A group of self-obsessed theatre stars decide to descend upon the conservative Indiana town and support the girls. A huge cast of musical regulars are in this song-filled story of acceptance, including Meryl Streep, Nicole Kidman, James Corden, Keegan-Michael Key, and Tracey Ullman.

In the animated film *Rumble*, we are introduced to "Tentacluaris," an undefeated monster wrestling champion, played by Terry Crews. A young girl named Winnie follows in her father's footsteps and begins coaching an unlikely competitor, played by Will Arnett, an out of shape monster named Steve. This underdog tale releases on January 29<sup>th</sup>.

Stephanie as a multi-award-winning actor, writer, director, producer, voice talent, and comedian. She is a published author, co-host of "Eileen and Steph: Everything's Fine" podcast, and is the founder of the Not-for-profit "Durham Improv Collective Inc." Her years of experience in the corporate and entertainment industries has given her an edge as an insurance broker, where she specializes in Business and Entertainment insurance.

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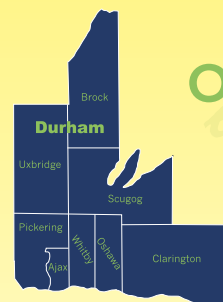


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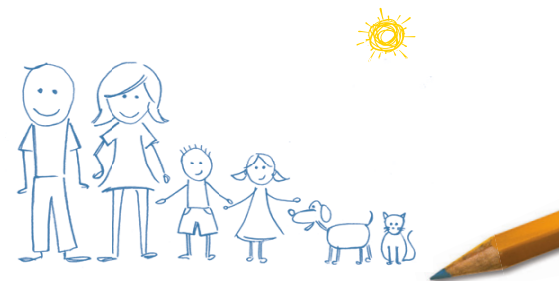
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by Tara Richardson



# Soul Searching

## Humans love storytelling.

Over the years, storytelling has shifted in terms of how we tell stories, but the act of storytelling remains consistent. Traditional storytelling consisted of people reciting fables, nursery rhymes, tales passed down amongst generations, and cultural narratives. These stories were originally written down on scrolls and over the years have evolved into movies, TV shows, books, magazines, etc. and are available in print and easily accessed on any smart phone or tablet.

I think we love consuming stories because it is an easy way to immerse ourselves in others' lives. Whether we are trying to escape our own reality for a little while or we are trying to learn something new, it offers us a platform to do so.

Although I personally love reading, and it has been a passion of mine since I first learned to read, many people feel overwhelmed by trying to fit reading into their busy lives. Yet, identify that they love reading.

Here's a few tips if you want to get into a habit of reading:

- Schedule reading time into your busy life by protecting this time like it is an important appointment (because it is!). Also, setting aside time to read does not necessarily mean hour long blocks- getting in 15 minutes of reading time is just as sufficient, and will feel more manageable.
- Read books that you are interested in, not ones that others tell you that you "should" read. (Unless you truly trust their judgment, of course.)
- Try different types of books. I love fiction and I also love books on personal growth that will motivate and inspire me. You do you.
- Read audiobooks. I like to use audiobooks when doing tasks that feel like chores (i.e. Cleaning or driving) so that it feels more fun and interesting. Plus, if it's a really engaging book then it might even inspire me to spend longer than planned on the task. By the way, if you have a library card then you can download audiobooks for free using their app.
- Get a reading partner and / or join a book club. Sometimes it's nice to discuss the book you are reading with others reading the same book. Check with your library for book club meetings; most are now virtual due to COVID.

For me, there's pretty much nothing better than getting all cozy with fuzzy socks and a blanket, a delightful cup of coffee and a good book. It's a great way to unwind after a challenging week (or year... thanks COVID-19).

I think many people feel like reading is superior to watching movies and TV shows, but the truth is that there should be no superiority involved because at the core of either is the desire to consume stories.

Tara is a wellness blogger for The Local Biz Magazine who hopes to publish her memoir on finding hope and meaning while living with a mental illness.



# Get Fit: Inside & Out

by Bianca Schaefer



## Creative Ways to Be Active Outdoors this Winter

One thing Covid-19 has taught us is the importance of spending time outdoors for our physical and mental well-being. But let's face it, greyer days and colder temperatures make it easy to stay inside. That's why I'd like to offer you some creative alternatives to help you stay active, avoid monotony and still get that fresh air your body needs.

### Feel good-do good; go Plogging!

Plogging? Yeah, this one is new for me too. It's derived from two words: "plocka" which means "to pick" and jogging. According to Wikipedia, this Swedish fitness activity which has been adopted by countries around the world, combines jogging and picking up litter. All you need is some outdoor running gear, gloves, a bag for trash and Voila; you can let that physical activity and good-doing begin!

### Go Bikepacking!

Ready for the next level in cycling? Invest in a Fat Tyre Bike! It's not only cool, it's super functional in wet and snowy weather. The fat tires offer impressive traction that can help you cycle virtually anywhere, including on muddy trails and sand. So put on some layers, grab your backpack and thermos and enjoy your two-wheel adventures!

### Winter Camping Fun

There are a ton of places in Ontario that offer winter camping for trailers and tents! It's a great way to enjoy the outdoors with endless possibilities to entertain the whole family. Think hiking, snowshoeing, sledding, skating, ice-fishing and having snowball fights just to name a few. Then cap off your days telling stories around the campfire and roasting those well-earned marshmallows!

### Create a Scenic Selfie Photo Shoot

No excitement in going for a plain old walk or hike? Why not turn it into a photo-op? A fresh snowfall and dazzling sunshine make for fabulous winter pics. Put on your brightest winter gear, then head outdoors to capture your best selfies. And don't let a dark, grey day discourage you. Your colourful attire and warm smile will brighten up even the dullest of days. Get the whole family involved too.

### Be the Invisible Snow Shoveler Superhero

It's always nice to help out a family member or neighbour when they are in need. But how cool would it be to put on our "invisible snow shoveler cape" and shovel someone's sidewalk or driveway without them knowing or taking the credit? I don't know about you, but just knowing they'd be surprised would be enough motivation to make me do it over and over again for people I may not even know.

Bianca Schaefer is a 360 Holistic Health Coach who inspires a global community to take charge of their health through nourishing their body, mind and soul with delicious foods, an active lifestyle and a mindset that believes anything is possible. Find out more about Bianca Schaefer on her personal website, Bianca Schaefer.

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by Sarah Malik



## Tweens, Teens & In-Between

*"You have to cherish things in a different way when you know the clock is ticking, you are under pressure."*  
**Chadwick Boseman**

Chadwick Boseman was a man of great impact. He was an actor, a director, a husband, a brother, a son, and a friend to many. He died this year in August, after a four-year battle with colon cancer.

Chadwick was someone I always looked up to. He was wise, honest, and a fantastic actor. His portrayal of *Black Panther* inspired many people. He did everything with grace and integrity. Few people knew about his struggles. Pictures of him surfaced online where he appeared thin and tired. When this happened, people began making jokes. He stopped posting pictures of himself and even deleted some older photos.

The fact that he was going through so much and had to deal with these negative comments in silence breaks my heart. Although people did not know the consequences of their words, the effects of them prevailed.

When I first started high school, I struggled with my mental health and became very sick. I was weak and always tired. I did not have many friends, and I fell behind in my schoolwork. This made people perceive me as boring and lazy. I often got in trouble for "skipping" class, and people stopped believing me when I would say it was because I was not feeling well. I eventually had to take a leave of absence from class. I notified my principal and teachers of what was going on. They all reacted with kind words and sympathy, but while I appreciated their kindness, I wish I had gotten it earlier. I was reminded about this experience when people finally realized why their comments about Chadwick's appearance were so insensitive.

I know firsthand the importance of treating people with compassion. Regardless if someone is a student, a friend, or a world-famous actor, we will never know what a person is feeling on the inside. We need to realize that instead of criticizing people for things like missing a deadline or being unsocial, we should really be extending our support and asking how we can be there for them.

My illness made me a stronger person. It taught me to be kinder to everyone regardless of how I perceived them to be and to remember that everyone is facing their own personal battle. I learned to seek help when needed, and realized that I do not need to always hide my pain. Being open and honest about my struggles is what got me the help I needed. This is easier said than done though, so we should never expect or assume that a person will tell us when they are hurting. We should therefore be kind to everyone and hope that this kindness eases the pain of anyone struggling in silence.

I wish you all a happy winter with safety and good health.

Sarah Malik is a Grade 12 student. She loves to read, write, and go on walks with her family and friends. Her dream is to one day travel the world.



# Family Matters

by Josie Myers



Not only is learning to read an essential life skill, but it's also an important milestone in your child's life. When your child learns to read on their own, they are growing up and taking a small step toward independence. Here are a few things you can do to help your child learn to love reading.

## Start Early

One way to foster a love of books in your children is to read to them from the time they are born. Even board books that don't have words can encourage a love of reading by getting your kids curious about books. As babies hear you read to them, they will start copying the sounds you make, pointing to the pictures, and learning new words.

## Be a Good Role Model

Have you ever noticed how your kids want to do the same things as you? It's important to let your kids see you reading. If you read on an e-reader or your phone, make sure you show your kids that you're reading a book, and not doing many of the other things you can do with your phone. If your kids are old enough to read on their own, you might want to consider a silent reading time where you each read your own book together in the same room.

## Try Books You Might Not Like

Would you rather your child didn't read at all, or read annoying books voraciously? You might be wondering what I mean by "annoying." Anything that isn't your reading taste can be annoying for you as a parent, but your kids might love it. Gross out humour is a popular subject with kids. For example, *The Captain Underpants* series by Dav Pilkey is wildly successful and loved by children of all ages even though their parents may not enjoy reading it to them.

## Keep Trying

Kids are more likely to enjoy reading if they are interested in the subject matter. It can be disappointing to choose a book for your child only for them to give you a funny look and set it aside. But if your kids are going to love reading, you need to keep trying different books. If you've been choosing books for your child, try taking them to the library with you so they can choose their own book.

## Make it a Habit

To encourage your child to read, start by reading to them at the same time every day. Bedtime is a great time for reading because it helps children relax.

With a master's degree in education and a background in Reiki, Josie Myers is an expert teacher and healer at her private practice Josie Myers - Opening and Balancing Life Force Energy. Josie helps moms find peace by supporting and guiding them to make the most of their motherhood journey. Josie lives in Ontario, Canada with her husband and son and her two cats.

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by Wendy Lee

# A Forkful of Healthy



## Peanut Banana Oatmeal Bars

A one bowl recipe, these healthy snack bars are adaptable to many different ingredients. Sometimes I change the recipe based on the ingredients I have on hand and they still manage to turn out wonderful! They definitely satisfy your sweet tooth, and should be on your to-bake list. When filled with chocolate chips, you can count them as dessert!

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 large ripe bananas (about 1 cup mashed)
- 1/2 cup creamy or crunchy peanut butter
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1/2 cup almond milk (or any non-dairy or dairy milk)
- 2 and 1/2 cups old-fashioned whole oats or quick oats
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

## DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 9-inch square baking pan with parchment paper with enough overhang on the sides to easily remove the bars from the pan. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl or in the bowl of your stand mixer, mash the bananas. On medium speed, beat or whisk in the remaining ingredients in the order listed. Batter will be a little thick, but still pourable.
3. Pour/spoon the mixture evenly into the prepared pan and bake for 25-28 minutes or until the center is set. It will still look relatively soft.
4. Remove from the oven and cool in the pan at room temperature for 30-60 minutes. After that, place the pan in the refrigerator for 1 hour until chilled. The bars are difficult to cut if they haven't been chilled.
5. Remove bars from the pan using the overhang on the sides then cut into bars. Sometimes I drizzle melted peanut butter over each, but that's optional. (Note: the parchment paper is always a little moist from soaking up some moisture from the bars.)
6. Cover leftover bars tightly and store in the refrigerator for up to 10 days. Freeze squares in single layers between sheets of parchment paper in a freezer-friendly container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator.

Protein: 10g

Carbs: 35g

Fat: 24g

Wendy is a food blogger, food photographer, writer, lifestyle strategist, self-taught chef and lover of animals. While living in Paris, she mastered the art of a perfect crepe and French cuisine, and also discovered the world of fabulous wines and champagne! Her passion to find healthy alternatives to popular dishes stems from her desire to live a fit and healthy lifestyle while still enjoying food!



# FINANCE & REAL ESTATE INSIGHTS

by Nicole Forrester



## Winter Renovations that add value to your Home for a Spring Sale

Are you looking to capitalize on the exponential gains we've seen in the housing market by getting ready to sell in spring? If so, here are a few cost-effective renovations to add value to your home for a spring sale.

**Sell, recycle or donate your old clothes and household items** — Nothing makes a home show better than when it's no longer cluttered. Your old weight bench once wiped off and put on *Facebook Marketplace* can bring in some extra \$\$ for your renovations.

**A fresh coat of paint** — Giving your home a fresh coat of paint in a neutral colour like white or gray is like a facelift for a home. If you use the same colour throughout, you can buy an industrial sized tub of paint and save a lot.

**Get rid of your old carpet** — Now more than ever, everyone is more sensitive to dirt and allergens living in carpet. Increase the value of your home immediately by saying goodbye to your carpet.

**Update your flooring** — Laminate flooring is a very cost-effective alternative to carpet that adds immediate value. Hardwood and engineered hardwood floors throughout a home are definitely a premium upgrade if you can afford it.

**Update your kitchen** — If a full kitchen remodel isn't in the budget, why not update your light fixtures, faucets and cupboard door handles? If you've got a little more available in the budget, have the cupboard doors painted or paint them yourself!

**Fix all the little things that are broken** — Have you got a broken door stopper? A tricky door handle? Light bulbs burnt out and never replaced? Make a list of all the little things you've let go over the years and cross them off one by one until everything is as good as new again.

**Give it a good old deep cleaning** — Once the holidays are over, decorations away and the renovations are completed, give your home a good old deep clean. Vacuum all the fan grill covers in the bathrooms, wash down all the baseboards, doors, door frames, light fixtures and fans. Clean the top of your fridge and inside your fridge and freezer. Clean all the nooks and crannies that likely get missed in your regular cleaning regime.

After that, call your preferred and trusted realtor to find out the current market value of your fresh and updated home. You may be amazed at how a little elbow grease, sweat equity, and small investments can translate in the market price!

Nicole Forrester is a local Durham & GTA Real Estate Broker with over 17+ years of experience in the financial industry. Trained on Bay Street as an Investment Executive & Professional Financial Planner for one of Canada's largest financial institutions, she has extensive experience negotiating large financial transactions. Nicole's goal is to be a blessing to every person she meets and recognizes that every trade in Real Estate is not just a house... it's a Home. For more information, search Nicole Forrester Real Estate Broker on Social Media.



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by Sue-Ann Bavlnka

# Ask Sue-Ann



Dear Sue-Ann:

I recently lost my father. It has left a huge hole in my life. Before he passed, we talked about him coming back and giving me a sign that he was okay. I live in an apartment and weird things have been happening. I swore I saw a shadow in my room and the light over the stove now flickers. This is not the sign my Dad and I talked about, but is what I am seeing him?

Signed: Missing my Dad

A. I am so sorry for your loss. Quite often, when people suffer a significant loss it creates an opportunity to dig a little deeper into their belief systems and what the process of death really means to them. It has been proven many times that the dead exists on this earth plane. What commonly happens is the person suffering the loss gains a heightened awareness to their surroundings and turns events that were always going on around them into something more than the coincidence of the event. Sometimes a flickering light is just that and a shadow is nothing more than a shadow. Over time, real events may happen when your loved one is sending a sign or it may not. If it does, you will know in your heart what it is and there will be no room for doubt. We don't conclusively know why some loved ones are able and others simply are not able to leave a sign. In the end, it may be about your belief system and keeping a watchful eye; you may be lucky enough to get your sign that you are longing for.

Sue-Ann is a mother of 3 and resides in the Oshawa area. She chooses to utilize her undeniable psychic ability to assist you in resolving all of life's issues. Host and Community Producer of Divine Lane on Rogers Cable 10, Tuesdays at 9 pm. You can find out more and forward your submissions to Sue-Ann at [sue-ann@divinelane.com](mailto:sue-ann@divinelane.com).



# The COACH Corner

by Malachi Brown



## Living in The Shadows

It's hard to flourish when you live in the shadows. We've seen this in nature. The plants, flowers, trees that get the most light outgrow the plants that don't. Overtime they become taller, healthier and offer more beauty. The plants in the shadows tend to be smaller, not as healthy, and at times, die from lack of sunshine.

This same phenomenon happens in the lives of people also. In the dynamics of families for example, one sibling may be given more attention than another. For example, one child is "daddy's favorite". This child gets more attention, more favours, accolades, affirmations and emotional bonding. In other instances, one child might be deemed better looking, smarter or more popular.

I have seen too often in my practice, the negative outcome from these early conditionings, especially for the person living in the shadows. These individuals tend to struggle with low self-esteem, self-worth and health issues. They have difficulty making decisions, an inability to make friends or keep the ones they have. There is usually a propensity to attract dominating or insecure partners.

For the person who was always in the spotlight, there are issues too. These individuals have a tendency to live their lives with a sense of entitlement, along with a false self of self-importance. These traits can lead to a lack of boundaries that over time can have dire consequences.

The interesting thing is, the person living in the shadows is in many cases a lot smarter and more rounded than the entitled person. Because they were usually seen as the underdog, they work harder, and just need opportunities to shine. This dynamic can change overtime when the shadow dweller musters up the courage to take on the stronger sibling, friend or parent. As they exert themselves and claim their power, the magic begins. They now discover strengths, talents, and a newly found confidence they never knew they had. We see this individual beginning to bloom. It's as if the shadow dweller can finally breathe. Unfortunately, there are times when the situation doesn't change until the stronger sibling moves away, or, in the case of the domineering parent; passes away.

The real power however, happens when you face the individuals directly. Amazingly enough they also need the healing. Their behavior, which looks strong, in the majority of cases is a result of their own brokenness. They need you to facilitate their healing as well.

If you lived your life in the shadow of someone else or circumstances, my challenge to you is to take back your power. Find your voice, your courage. Step out from under the shadow and step into the light. Claim your place in the spotlight and become the lead in your own life.

*You will never be you, until you stop being someone else...*

Malachi Brown, life coach, applies his passion in helping others unlock their full potential, enabling them to live the abundant lives they were created to have.



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by Linda Calder



# The Golden Years

I come from a family of readers. When we were growing up, my sister and I thought it was a great treat when we got to bring our books to the table and read while we were having supper. Thinking about it now, Mam probably had a book she was reading and wanted to keep reading it. Whatever the reason, we loved the opportunity. When we moved from England, my sister and I think that half the boxes we brought with us were books. Dad came five months ahead of Mam, my sister and I, so I imagine the choice of what to bring was Mam's. I still have a lot of those books on my top bookshelf in the living room.

When I was in Grade 7, my teacher introduced us to Stephen Leacock. I remember him walking up and down the aisle reading, *The Sinking of the Mariposa Bell*. It was a great story. That was why I read several of Leacock's stories over the years. I still have the first book I bought for my son when he was about three months old. It's in a box with little souvenirs of parts of his life. Like many parents, I read to my son for as many years as he would let me. My dad had emphysema so he couldn't do active things with his grandsons, but he could read to them, and he spent many hours doing just that.

At school, most kids came with a love of books. They looked forward to the story I read each day. They enjoyed their weekly visit to the school library and looked for a perfect book to take home for the week. At one time, the whole school did silent reading at the same time in the classroom. It was called U.S.S.R. which stood for "uninterrupted sustained silent reading." Everyone, including teachers read at the same time. It was a great idea at the time!

Due to COVID, things are a little different now but libraries are getting creative. The Whitby Public Library has a, "Library To-Go for Kids and Families." There is a form to fill out that asks questions like the ages of the kids and their interests, which the library then uses to fill a "surprise bag" with materials based on these general preferences. Most libraries in Durham Region offer a service similar to this. The Ajax libraries for instance offers "Grab & Go" bundles – for both adults and kids – where readers can choose from various themes and titles. Crafts are often included in the kids' bags.

Grandparents are often the "fun people" in the family, but using books can be a great learning experience for both you and your grandkids. We are living in challenging times. If we can do something to ease the burden on our own grown kids, let's do it with books. Keep smiling!

Linda Calder is a retired teacher. She likes to write and enjoys spending time with her family. She also enjoys going on cruises, taking pictures and scrapbooking.



# Winter Horoscope

DECEMBER 2020 to FEBRUARY 2021

by Julie Antoinette



## Aries (March 21 – April 20)

You feel confused about a long-time friend. You thought you knew them so well but lately their mask seems to be slipping. It's hard to trust your own observations against your memories because of the inner conflict it causes. Consider perhaps that you are changing too. Some things break our heart but fix our vision.

## Taurus (April 21 – May 21)

If your anxiety feels heightened lately, take comfort that you are not alone. Your requirement for comfort and security are currently threatened by global circumstance. Your challenge is to find your happiness within the concept of "less is more." Remember, life begins at the end of your comfort zone.

## Gemini (May 22 – June 21)

In these uncertain times, many feel insecure and grasp to maintain stability. Not you. The present conditions are perfectly suited for Gemini to thrive. Multiple possibilities open up before you creating the opposite dilemma – "What to choose?" The Japanese word for "crisis" also dubs for "opportunity." The best choice is always that which excites you the most. Follow your excitement.

## Cancer (June 22 – July 22)

Your sign is the least bothered by the current lockdown measures. Just like the crab carrying its home on its back wherever it goes, you too are all about your home. Working from home is the most singular delight you could imagine, not to mention the home improvements you've been making! Hunker down in your bunker!

## Leo (July 23 – August 22)

That thing you want to do, you should go do it. That brilliant idea that came to you in a moment of celestial inspiration gently knocks from beyond an invisible door. Will you answer? You are the vessel by which it will be birthed into reality to benefit many. Release any doubt or fear of failure. You are merely the vessel. It does not belong to you alone, it belongs to all of us.

## Virgo (August 23 – September 23)

You must truly understand the importance of boundaries. There is a danger in opening yourself up to invasion by unscrupulous parasitical types. Do not deny the power of the word "NO" with no explanation required. It will serve you greatly in preserving your energy, stability and sanity. Someone wise once said, "The only people who get upset about you setting boundaries are the ones who were benefiting from you having none."

## Libra (September 24 – October 23)

Karma is hard at work checking and balancing her accounts. Why is that unjust thing happening to you? Flip the roles and think back for your answer. How did that precious gift ever make its way into your life? Apply the same thought principle. Karma never loses an address. Now that you know how karma works, make it work for you.

## Scorpio (October 24 – November 22)

Sometimes our minds lead us into dark places. Recently there has been ample fodder for irrational fears of all types. You must be a diligent gatekeeper in what you allow your mind to entertain. One thought can quickly snowball into a black ball of raging anxiety. The great philosopher Nietzsche said, "... If thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze into thee."

## Sagittarius (November 23 - December 21)

You take great pride in the quality of your craft. If the world only knew the dedication to detail you embrace, the utmost selectivity you exercise, the patience you exert, the years you have given to build your craft and skill, you'd surely be more appreciated. Time to appreciate yourself. Stop working for a pittance and start charging more. How can you expect others to value you when you allow yourself to be devalued?

## Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

You have a brilliant business idea that fits society's current crisis perfectly. Don't dismiss it as impractical or unprofitable. Set to work and draw up a business plan and then take action. Many success stories have the humblest of beginnings. You and others will mutually benefit from this effort. Society as a whole will be improved thanks to you.

## Aquarius (January 20 – February 19)

You've grown accustomed to relying on the presence of something in your life. You've always considered that presence a "sure thing" to be accessed whenever you wished. But something has changed and it is no longer available to you. Perhaps you took it for granted? The good thing is that now you truly understand the value it brought you. Bear this in mind for future gifts that are bestowed upon you.

## Pisces (February 20 – March 20)

It is time to learn the power of goodbye. The gift of closure is one of those lessons in life that we all must embrace. The burning of bridges, the final nail in the coffin, crossing the Rubicon, let bygones be bygones. Allow yourself to feel the pain of loss, but also, allow yourself to feel the relief of blessed endings and the heralding of new beginnings.

Written by Julie Antoinette. Julie is a Sociology and Psychology graduate. In her free time, she is a crochet adventurer and musical muse. In this horoscope, she relays intuitive messages of guidance from the collective astrological archetypes. As above, so below.

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