

Breakdown to Breakthrough:

Boosting Better Tomorrows from Six-Plus Feet Away

- By Risa Simon



Could there be a silver lining looming on the other side of COVID 19's cloud? No doubt this is hard to imagine for those anxiously awaiting their transplant in what has become a disruptive and unpredictable standstill. COVID 19's *pause* is playing tremendous havoc on the kidney patient community, from canceling donor testing to postponing transplant procedures and more.

Previously planned events are now stagnantly bound to constant uncertainty. Thought bubbles are spinning with troubling concerns: *"Will my donor change their mind? Will my GFR hold? Can I keep myself safe? Will I be forced on dialysis—or continue to require dialysis for the rest of my life?"*

While these fears are threatening life as we knew it, a *shift* in perspective could build a more promising bridge to the other side. Why do I say this? Because social distancing presents a new window of opportunity to reexamine life's playbook and align our goalposts.

It's simply a matter of choice. We can choose to sit frozen in fear—or we can shift what's beyond our control to work to *our* advantage.

While this new mindset will be difficult at first, perceived gain will naturally influence intuitive buy-in. For instance, a **transplant hopeful** who uses this *space in time* to [attract back-up donors](#) and improve healthier lifestyle habits can support [surgical success](#) and recovery. They can also seek insight from experienced [mentors](#) while encouraging friends and family to join their virtual messaging outreach team.

Potential donors can also use this time to video chat with experienced donors to gain personal perspective. They can also request ABO blood types and discuss donation and "[paired exchange](#)" options through their patient portals and tele-medicine platforms. Yet, one of the most invaluable things potential donors can do during this standstill *is* educate themselves and their loved ones about surgical procedures, risks and recovery, and life-after donation recommendations. Minimizing family fear is the clear way to earn their blessing. Offering information and additional "*soaking time*" is not only wise, it's essential.

Most [kidney disease](#) patients can benefit from COVID's unexpected lifestyle pause by choosing healthier home-prepared meals, ramping up DIY exercise routines, and eliminating outside stressors known to exacerbate blood pressure and advance their disease.

[Dialysis patients](#) can use their stay at home regimen to enjoy more time with family members who are not engaged in essential businesses. They also have more time to appreciate infection control practices in their clinics, thank their care-providers and explore home treatment options.

Similarly, [transplant recipients](#) can use this time to be extra diligent about protecting their "adopted kidneys" through immunosuppressive adherence. Of course, due to immunosuppression, staying out of harm's way is even more critical at this time. Fortuitously, COVID's limit to community contact naturally minimizes risks.

[Living kidney donors](#) can use this time to become more mindful of their own safety. This reminder is extremely important because their natural instinct is to help others. Their recipients are imploring them to put their own oxygen mask on first.

Families hunkering down under the same roof (or sharing virtual coffees, happy hours and video potlucks) can use this time to strengthen their relationships. Husbands and wives, sons and daughters, sisters and brothers, and mothers and fathers who rarely see one another, can do so now virtually. Families wrestling with uncertainty can also seek a better understanding and appreciation for one another. If you think about it, families are hardwired to protect one another, yet sometimes these dynamics can create a cauldron of mixed emotions that unwittingly generate distress and heartache.

While it can be deafening to experience family silence, it can also be hard to accept “protective pushback” from an extended hand. No matter what the family is experiencing, over-protective behaviors and stuffed emotions are sure to tear them apart. Perhaps we can use this time to connect with family by engaging in compassionate and fun-loving communications. By doing so, everyone wins.

At times like this, when we feel incredibly vulnerable and powerless, we are called upon to “lean in” and virtually unite to inject positivity back into the world.

Never lose sight of the fact that you are always in control of your intentions. The *good news* about good intentions is that they are limitless. From what I’m told, they can circulate exponentially when released from 6-plus feet away.

Use this *breakdown* as a *breakthrough* by [visualizing](#), [meditating](#) and filling your [gratitude journals](#) with “feel-good intentions.” Each night, before closing the cover on those daily entries, send the intentions behind those written words *up* to awaken the silver lining looming inside COVID's cloud.

It’s up to us to expose COVID’s silver lining. Together we can inject positivity into the dark clouds—for the more light we reflect, the more rainbows breakthrough.

As we walk together (even from six-plus feet away), be on the lookout for those brilliant constellations illuminating the path to a better tomorrow.♥

About the author:

Risa Simon is the founder and CEO of TransplantFirst Academy, The Proactive Path and Simon Says Seminars, inc—as well as the author of *Shift Your Fate* and *In Pursuit of a Better Life: The Ultimate Guide Finding Kidney Donors*. As a preemptive kidney transplant recipient, Risa’s on a mission to improve patient outcomes by opening doors to preemptive transplantation opportunities. Her work includes industry consulting, motivational seminars and webinars, “best-life” coaching and patient advocacy.



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