

I turned 50 yesterday -- April 22, 2020. Yes, I was born on the original Earth Day. On my 50th birthday I was supposed to be in Iceland. Not for Earth Day celebrations, necessarily, and not because it was a "dream destination," although I have wanted to go. The Iceland trip had been the plan for April vacation for about 6 months. My younger son's club soccer team was going on a special diplomatic and educational trip all about soccer. It was to be a fast, filled, five-night trip of soccer games and touristy visits.

I pictured my actual birthday including a soccer match or two and/or a visit to the Blue Lagoon and/or a nature hike and then some eating and drinking -- "A couple of Einstok arctic pale ales, please." Interestingly, a father of another soccer player also turned 50 yesterday, so I imagine the ale and brennivin would have been flowing steadily last night....

Today is Thursday, April 23, 2020. I am not in Iceland. I am at home, at my dining room table, in my pajamas. It is day 39 of sheltering-in-place, staying at home, social distancing. Moreover, it's school "staycation" week, and, as an elementary school teacher, I don't have actual job-related work to which I must attend. My 21-year old college junior has coursework and online classes today. He's up and working at his laptop which sits on his homemade desk in our living room looking out the large picture window. At 10:30 a.m., my 17-year old, the one who very likely would be playing in a soccer game somewhere in or around Reykjavik right now, is still in bed. He too is on school vacation, whatever that really means for a high school student at this point in April of 2020. "I'll make you French toast if you get out of bed before noon," I bribe him.

The high temperature might reach 50 degrees, and it is supposed to be sunny all day. "Should I go for a run or get the boys outside for a hike?" I think to myself as I write. No rush to make any big decisions. It's 11:00 now, and I have all day to decide which means I have too much time to decide. Before I know it, the clock will read 5:00 p.m., and I'll think, "What will the weather be like tomorrow?" I might grab a beer (not an Einstok) and plunk down on the couch to watch two more episodes of "Longmire," -- I love a good crime drama! -- a Netflix original, and

something to look forward to in the late afternoon or early evening. Of all the things to be worried about right now, I'm a little anxious about "my show" ending. I am currently in season four, episode 8 or 9, of a six-season series. "What will I watch next?" There are many television series that seem worthy that I have never had the time to watch, and there are certainly many that I can dismiss -- I will not watch "Tiger King."

There are movies, too. As a family, we have already watched "The Irishman," "1917," and "Ford vs. Ferrari." I can honestly declare that I have never seen this many oscar-nominated films so early in the season or even in one year. I also want to watch "Harriet" and, possibly, "The Marriage Story." These two will have to be "on my own" as they will certainly not entice my sons (...maybe my husband). I'll save "Joker" for a family movie night. "Parasite," 2020's academy-award winner, will be one to watch, too, depending on how the weather is over the next couple of weeks.

If the lists of television shows and movies aren't enough, there are the books! My book list for shelter-in-place includes Becoming Dr. Seuss: Theodor Geisel and the Making of an American Imagination by Brian Joy Jones (I am a teacher.); Find Me by André Aciman (I am a middle-aged woman!); and Front Row at the Trump Show by Jonathan Karl (I have recently acquired a taste for politics in my old age.). "Which ones have I finished reading?" you ask. Well, it seems that even "free" time is fleeting. I have started two of the three books, and my goal is to . . .

Finally, there is the list of chores. The list of chores is longer than the entertainment lists:

"Wash the windows -- it's spring and you actually have the time."

"Clean out that darn closet with artifacts from 1994."

"Go outside and rake -- ah, the wind...."

"Thoroughly clean out and scrub down the kitchen cabinets."

"Organize the Christmas stuff down in the basement -- wait, you did that back in March.

Pat yourself on the back."

It seems like I have all the time in the world, so why am I not tackling each chore day by day? Why haven't I read three novels in a month? I could be training for a marathon or working on my master's degree! These are the things I could do, would do, if only I had more time. Now there is time. But how does one prioritize when all time is nearly "leisure" time?

Human beings in the early 21st century are robot-like. We're constantly "doing" and assessing ourselves on how much we "do." I don't like to admit this to most people, but I am nearly *enjoying* social distancing and stay-at-home orders. I mustn't go here, there, and everywhere? I can't go to work? I shouldn't be going store to store to find the best deals? I don't have to get my hair done or buy items for my classroom or attend another parent meeting at the high school? There aren't any committee meetings, social gatherings, sports practices, or events to attend. All non-essential appointments have been cancelled. **I can just be.** Be with my thoughts, be with my family, be in tune to the outdoors and nature, be frugal, be focused on one activity at a time....be creative. As an adult, I have long believed that time is a precious gift. Today, the day after my birthday, I am grateful to have this time -- time unobstructed by health issues, by an overloaded schedule, by too many "artificial" concerns and stressors.

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