



HOW TO TRAVEL DURING CHALLENGING TIMES

Three Steps to beat the travel blues

INTRODUCTION

Travel and exploration can be quite an undertaking. Planning, Preparing and taking the step to immerse ourselves into an adventure with all its incredible challenges. Yet, travel continues to attract and hold us, the adventurers of this world into its endless grasp of curiosity. With all its amazing benefits, we seek that thrill. We seek that sense of adventure. Not travelling is making us feel caged, trapped and boxed in. We need travel to escape the normality of life, its deadly routines and habits. It speaks to our souls. An inescapable feeling entraps us.

By being in the middle of a major pandemic, or in other challenging times, the idea of not travelling can be quite torturous for us. We can get fidgety, annoyed and frustrated. And if that wasn't enough struggle already, social unrest and a less than stable political climate is creating its own turmoil outside of us in the Environment.

Not the easiest of times to take our next adventure. We may become discouraged or fearful to take the step to travel and explore the marvelous world around us.

Fortunately, despite these hurdles, this does not have to stop us from exploring. There are opportunities available to us, the wanderers of the world, to take the journeys we so long to have. All we need is some steps and concrete ideas to help us get over that hurdle, real or imagined.

Below are 3 steps designed to get your mind right, emotions right and to guide you into an action-oriented state to help you take your next trip, along with a bonus - 3 ideas you can implement to explore locally close to your home in case of ongoing restrictions.

STEP 1. GET YOUR MIND RIGHT

Early in the pandemic, I felt sorry for myself that I could not travel to Europe and that I had to cancel my planned trips to Peru and Africa as well. I was longing to go to these destinations for the longest time, and now I found out that I could not go at this time. I started to feel sorry for myself and felt frustrated.

I concluded quite simplistically that this was the end of travel for me. This may sound strange to you, but this is what the mind tends to do, it can oversimplify when you don't pay attention. It's easy to make incorrect assumptions and conclusions. Instead of asking myself powerful questions, my mind went to work and dramatized outcomes based on information provided, which was mostly garbage provided by the environment around me (news, people that were fearful, etc)

But what if I had questioned my mind? What if I would have asked myself "Is that really true?" and "What evidence do I have to support that claim?". I would have found that it was not as dramatic as I had thought at first. I would have found out that I could also travel locally to places I wanted to visit for the longest time, but I had not too because I wanted to visit far away destinations first.

Once I got my mind right, I decided to explore places close to us. I ended up taking an amazing road trip to visit Yellowstone National Park, which was breathtaking. I may have not visited if it was not for the pandemic. What thoughts do you have around the pandemic, or the environment that do not serve you? What incorrect conclusions may you be drawing?

In summary, Unfavorable circumstances don't mean it's the end of the world for exploring, adventures and travel. Question yourself and your thinking constantly. Here are some sample questions you can ask yourself to question the validity of your thoughts and assumptions.

Mindset questions: Ask yourself "what is great about this?," "what new opportunities does this create for me?," "what new doors opened up that were previously closed?"

Action step: Make a list of 10 places that are in a 0-10-mile radius from where you live. Visit one of them each week. Then, make a list of 10 places that are in a 10-50-mile radius from where you live. Visit one of those places each week. Then do the same for a 50-200-mile radius. You get the point. Enjoy your adventures! Bonus: Explore 10 items in your own house. Every day objects. Discover something new.

STEP 2. CHECK IN WITH YOUR FEELINGS

With not being able to go out early in the pandemic, I felt frustrated, angry, depressed. I wanted to go out so badly. Yet, it felt such a large hurdle to go and do anything. And instead of checking in with myself and accepting my feelings, I did the next best thing that I could think of at the time: Complain, Moan, Whine about how bad everything was and how the whole world was against me.

The mind and body work quite closely together, and we intuitively know this. But, how often do we check in with our feelings? How often do we scan our body consciously to understand what may be energy blocks caused by our thoughts? In his great book, *The Body Keeps the Score*, Bessel van der Kolk, M.D. explains how traumatic experiences are stored in the body in great depth and how we can overcome some of those events. Thus, as a result we need to consciously check in with our body to understand where some of those past traumas or issues are still 'hanging around'.

I've found that in normal conditions, it's relatively easy for me to check in with my feelings and see how am I doing by scanning my body, but in the first few weeks of the pandemic, I found myself whining and complaining, and focusing attention in places outside of myself, rather than inside myself. Thus, reinforcing my thoughts of not being able to travel and explore. My body was reinforcing my mental state.

Recently, By simply sitting with my feelings and asking myself "what is my body telling me" I was able to deeply connect with some past issues that raised to the surface because I could no longer escape them by changing environments physically, or mentally. Sometimes not being able to travel externally allows us to travel deeper internally, to our hearts and if you believe in your soul, to deeply connect with ourselves.

In my #1 bestselling book "The Transformative Power of Travel", I explain how travel puts you often in this environment where you need to change and adapt quite rapidly. Yet sometimes, the environment itself is not changing, which forces you to have change your approach. In this case, I had to change my desire to escape my uncomfortable feelings and emotions, to being ok to sit with them, and talk them through with my coach. Feelings of being trapped and not being able to 'escape' from the new normal was what was holding me back from accepting my emotions in the new environment and made it easier for me to adapt.

In summary, take the time to explore and get connected to your emotions. Learn to use them for you, not against you and holding you back from moving forward. If you do desire to experiment with this, feel free to reach out to me and I am more than happy to explore those feelings with you.

Hearth questions: "What is my body telling me?", "What [emotions/feelings](#) is this bringing up for me?", "Which [needs](#) are going unmet?", Why do I allow myself To feel this way?". "How do I want to feel?"

Action step: Take three deep breaths. Notice where you may feel tension in your body. Scan your body slowly, from the top of your head, your facial muscles, your throat, neck, shoulders, chest, back, hips, thighs, calf muscles, feet, and toes. What do you notice? Where do you feel tension? Breathe into those spots. Visualize a bright golden light making it through your body, from the top of your head, through those spots that may be tensed, and release into it. Do this 3 times a day and see how your thoughts may shift along with it. When you are in a relaxed state, it's also easier to make decisions and take actions.

STEP 3. TAKE ACTION

I can spend hours and hours without even being aware with thoughts in my mind about what could be, or must be, or need to be. I do this, despite finding this extremely counterproductive. I usually don't feel any better, and most of the time I feel worse. For example, early in the pandemic, I had a hard time working out at the house. I would tell myself this is not a gym, it's hard, it's not the same, it's not as fun, I miss the people around me and much more. While this may not be directly related to travel, the same can be applied to exploring locally and tell yourself it's not the same, it's not as easy, and other non-productive thoughts that inhibit you from discovering magic all around you.

It was not until I started to do even a 1-minute activity, that these thoughts dissipated. The moment I started acting, my thoughts automatically moved to the background. I no longer questioned all the things that were not working, I instead focused on what I could do. I moved from a victim mindset, to a victor mindset. But I didn't get there by thinking, I got there by doing.

Ask yourself "What is one step you can take today to explore something locally?" and then do this immediately. Reframing your words can also help. Instead of telling yourself "I need to" try reframing it to "I chose to". Alternatively, you may also want to explore telling yourself "Let's start by" instead of "I need to finish". Often, we use words that have a negative emotion associated with them. For example, we may relate it to a time where someone told us, like a parent or teacher something that we had to do. We came to resist to do this and thus if we talk to ourselves this way, it may bring that back without full realization that this is happening. Tell yourself I chose to explore this new road close to my house for 5 minutes. Or Let's start by walking to a park close to my house.

Action questions: "What am I willing to do?", "What am I unwilling to do?", "I chose to...", "Let's start..."

Action step: Acting is like building a muscle. You can teach yourself to act, simply by taking action. Depending on your personality, and where you are in your life it may not be as easy for you to act. Acting, is making decisions. Fear can get in the way of acting, therefore practice sticking to the three second rule.

The three second rule tells us to only give yourself three seconds to act. With only three seconds to work with, you're not giving yourself enough time to overthink things. If you no longer must get over any mental hurdles or make any decisions (should I talk to this person?) it's easier for your brain to simply act.

Bonus: Make 3 decisions you've procrastinated on this week using the reframe technique.

BONUS: IDEAS TO IMPLEMENT TO EXPLORE LOCALLY

While it's great to get your mind right, your heart right and building the muscles to take action, you may need some motivation or ideas to get started. Below are three of my personal favorites that I use to explore during challenging times. I look forward to hearing your own ideas!

Idea 1 – Visit a specialty market

A great way to explore a different country is by exploring its foods and cuisine's. But what if you can't go? How can you still get a little bit of faraway close by? The answer: Visit a local specialty market. You are instantly transported into a different continent, and different countries.

Taking the time to explore different foods, produce, packaged foods with different languages instantly move you into a brand-new world, full of options and possibilities. Some markets even have a little bookstore or stationery to explore. See what differences exist to what you're used to. What are some of the differences you find? How about similarities? Or oddities you do not yet understand?

Idea 2 – Visit a different neighborhood

Sometimes we forget that great things are right below our noses, and yet we forget to look close to us. How many times have you spoken to someone close to you and asked them if they have visited local sights, the likely answer you get back is “No I have not seen this, but I am planning to” and yet most of the time we do not see the things that are close to our home.

We tend to find reasons or make excuses instead of searching for and discovering options close by. On your next walk, find a new neighborhood to go to. Observe the differences in housing, the streets or shops, the types of people that walk there, the different animals you may see on your path. How about street signs, or different colors in the environment?

Idea 3 – Read a book or review memories

A great way to transport yourself into a different world, right in the comfort of your living room is by reading a great book of a place you may have visited, or perhaps of a city or country you are planning to visit. Perhaps you are into movies, or video games. In that case, explore movies or video games that have a setting in a different location to explore how people live. Imagine yourself with your eyes closed in that location, being with those people, feeling how it feels, picking up all the smells, and sounds of the environment.

Your brain can not differentiate between what’s real or envisioned, thus you can make the trip right in your mind. Alternatively, explore virtual reality technology and see if there are places you can go to through that experience.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, it’s about keeping an open mind that is open to explore other opportunities by checking in with your feelings and acting. This includes constantly reinforcing these thoughts the moment you tell yourself that your adventures have come to a stop because of whatever limitations you face, physical or mental, this is exactly what you will find the evidence for. If , however, you tell yourself there is enough to explore around me, and ask yourself what else can I find that is of interest close to me, your brain will go to work and find things for you to explore.

To your next adventure!



Tom Leegstra



#1 Best-selling author of *The Transformative Power of Travel*