



# GRADUATION 2020: THE COVID CLASS

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We are living in a unique time. You are therefore a unique graduating class. You may well be known forever as “the Covid Class.”

For the first time in history, billions of people, including healthy people and people living in free societies, have been confined to their homes. So let me offer you three lessons about life based on what you’ve experienced.

Number one: Life is hard. It’s unfair. It’s unpredictable.

Until now, most young people, at least in the West, did not appreciate how true this is. You’ve been living in a time and place in which so many of life’s hardships have been overcome. You’ve probably lived a healthier, safer, and freer existence than almost any young people who ever lived before you.

And if that is true, you would only know about how hard life is if you’ve read about the sufferings of others, such as the awful suffering people endured during World Wars I and II, not to mention the starvation and disease of the medieval and ancient worlds.

Because of the hardships caused by the coronavirus—including the shattering of millions of people’s livelihoods and dreams throughout the world—you’ve come to sense how hard life is. And that understanding equips you to deal much better with life’s challenges—which are inevitable.

Number two: Always be grateful.

Gratitude is probably the most important trait you can have—because it is the source of both happiness and goodness. In other words, you cannot be either a happy person or a good person unless you are a grateful person.

Unfortunately, most people don’t learn how important gratitude is until it’s too late. I’ll bet this makes a lot more sense to you now, thanks to the coronavirus pandemic. How often have you thought of the good old days when you could go to a restaurant with friends, or to a sporting event or concert, or visit a relative you love? But were you grateful for those things when you were able to do them? Probably not.

So now, make this promise to yourself: I will not wait until I lose the good things in my life to be grateful for having them. Or, to put it another way, adopt an attitude that has guided me all of my life: If nothing’s horrific, life is terrific.

Most people wait for something wonderful to happen to be happy. My view has always been that instead of waiting for something great to happen to be happy, I will be happy until something awful happens.

Number three: Freedom is fragile. Very fragile.

The ease with which most Americans acquiesced to the removal of many of their most basic rights—even if you agree with that removal—should take your breath away. At the very least, it should make you realize how easily any government can take away people's most elementary freedoms. This happened around the world, but I single out America because no country has been so free for so long. America, more than any country, has symbolized liberty. That's why France gave America—and no other country—the Statue of Liberty.

Yet people living in states with fewer deaths from the coronavirus than from car accidents acquiesced to living under house arrest except to get food or medicine, being barred from walking outside with more than one other person, and being barred from walking their dog without wearing a face mask. Remarkably, they acquiesced to all this as they watched their life savings, their family business, or their job disappear.

Now, again, you may agree that this should have been done even in states with almost no deaths due to the coronavirus. I don't. But that's not the issue here. The issue is how easily modern governments can become police states. In sophisticated New York City, the mayor appealed to people to send the police photos of fellow citizens gathering in groups of more than two or not wearing a face mask outside.

You may think all this was reasonable. But what is to stop governments from doing such things when you don't think it's reasonable?

If there are any silver linings to the coronavirus shutdown of the world's economic and social life, one would be the opportunity to learn life-enriching lessons. So I offered you three:

Life is hard. Always be grateful. And freedom is fragile.

I'm Dennis Prager.