

Introduction

by Joe Tye

It has almost become a cliché to call the confluence of calamities that afflicted the year 2020 – calamities that are still playing out into 2021 – unprecedented. It has also become a cliché to speak of “the light at the end of the tunnel.” We all, each in our own ways, hope and pray that a Covid-19 vaccine will bring a quick end to the coronavirus pandemic, but it’s just not that simple, is it?

For one thing, there is not just one tunnel. There is the Covid-19 (and a growing number of variants) tunnel. There is the economic recession tunnel, the social and racial injustice tunnel, the political polarization tunnel. While these have been brought together in a catastrophic confluence by the coronavirus pandemic, each tunnel is of different length and requires a different light to bring us to its end.

For another, most of us are at different points in each tunnel. For some people Covid-19 has been devastating, while others have been infected but been asymptomatic. Some people have fully recovered while others will be long-haulers, and there is still no real understanding what the long-term health implications will be for them.

Likewise, millions of people have lost job and thousands of businesses have gone under while others have managed to hang on, or even prosper, through the recession. For some a short-term palliative such as extended unemployment benefits or a payroll protection plan loan will see them through, while others might never fully recover financially.

Both Covid-19 and the economic recession have been more brutal for racial minorities and those who were already socially and financially disadvantaged. And while the United States has the world’s highest mortality rate from Covid-19, it will also have a disproportionate share of the world’s vaccine supply. So where you live and what you look like will have a profound impact on how long your tunnel will be, and how brightly the light at the end of that tunnel will shine, if it’s there at all.

Beyond these tunnels, once we reach the lights at their ends, there will be more tunnels. As one important example, Diana Hendel (who is a contributor to *Stay Strong For Us*) and her colleague Dr. Mark Goulston say that Covid-19 was the

earthquake; they predict that the aftershocks will be an epidemic of PTSD. Nicholas Christakis, author of the book *Apollo's Arrow: The Profound and Enduring Impact of Coronavirus on the Way We Live*, projects that we will not fully recover some sense of normalcy before 2024, if then. Those who have lost love ones to the disease will never fully recover.

The Ultimate Paradox

Banal bromides like “that which doesn’t kill you makes you stronger” and “one door closes, another door opens” are often true, but people rarely want to hear them at precisely the time they most need to hear them. That is the ultimate paradox of human motivation:

**Whatever you most need in your life will be
hardest for you to find at the time when you need it most.**

It’s easy to have courage when your fears are small, easy to persevere when the obstacles are mere speed bumps. It’s when your fears are monstrous that it’s hardest to find the courage to confront them; it’s when obstacles are mountainous that it’s hardest to find the determination to persevere. It’s easy to have a sunny disposition when the world is smiling at you, easy to give to others when you have everything you need yourself. It’s easy to not complain when you have little to complain about – much harder when you have legitimate reasons to complain, as do most people in this era of pandemic, recession, disruption, and polarization. The Pickle Pledge and the Pickle Challenge for Charity have never been more needed, but encouraging people to make the commitment to turn complaints into contributions has never been a tougher sell. For more on this, see the message by Jane McCurley, Chief Nurse Executive at Methodist Health System in San Antonio, Texas and visit [The Pickle Pledge website](#).

Stay Strong For Us Web Resource and E-book

The messages of hope and encouragement in *Stay Strong For Us* will help you assure that these emotional resources are there for you to tap into when you need them most. You will hear from more than a hundred healthcare leaders, leading authors, and others including:

Hospital and health system CEOs including Dr. Kurt Newman, CEO of Children’s National Hospital; Roxanna Gapstur, CEO of WellSpan Health; Randy Oostra, CEO of ProMedica; and Tony Slonim, CEO of Renown Health.

Nursing leaders including Jane Englebright, Chief Nurse Executive at HCA Healthcare; Maureen Swick, Enterprise Nurse Executive at Atrium Health; Bob Dent, Chief Nursing Officer at Emory Healthcare; and Rosanne Raso, Nursing

Officer at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell and Editor-in-Chief of *Nursing Management*.

Leading authors including Steven Pressfield, author of *The War of Art and Gates of Fire*; Diana Hendel, author of *Responsible* and coauthor of *Trauma to Triumph*; and Quint Studer, author of *Hardwiring Excellence* and *The Busy Leader's Handbook*.

Leaders in education including Liz Madigan, CEO of Sigma Theta Tau International, the International Nursing Honor Society; Kathleen Williamson, President & Academic Dean at Mount Carmel College of Nursing; and Pat Yoder-Wise, President of the Wise Group.

Organization and association leaders Mark and Bonnie Barnes, cofounders of the DAISY Foundation; Jason Wolf, President of the Beryl Institute; and Steve Lawler, CEO of the North Carolina Hospital Association.

International healthcare leaders including Paul De Raeve, EFN Secretary General of EU Nurses; Annette Kennedy, Commissioner at the World Health Organization; and Dr. Richard Van Zyl-Smit of the Cape Town Lung Institute of South Africa.

Frontline heroes from around the world.

These include heartfelt messages of hope, encouragement, and inspiration; practical advice for coping with, and growing through, this challenging time; personal stories; and even a few original poems. Whoever you are, wherever you work, and whatever your current situation, there is something at *Stay Strong For Us* that will help you Stay Strong.

In Praise of Band-Aids

Some people will say that, given the magnitude of the harm that has been done, and that continues to be done, by the pandemic and the recession, something like *Stay Strong For Us* is just a band-aid. That is, of course, quite true. But consider the purpose of a band-aid: it stops the bleeding and helps to prevent infection. The wound might need suturing and antibiotics later, but right now it needs a band-aid.

Our world will need a whole lot of healing once we are through this tunnel (these tunnels), but right now we need a band-aid. Right now we need you to Stay Strong for the people you serve and care for. Right now we need you to Stay Strong for your family and your community. Right now we need you to Stay Strong for yourself. Right now we need you to Stay Strong for us.

Everyday Courage for Extraordinary Times

When you see this seal next to the name of a contributing author, it means that their organization is participating in the Values Coach *Everyday Courage for Extraordinary Times* program. Think of *Everyday Courage* as the advanced course for the *Stay Strong for Us* project. It features 21 short video modules, 12 eBooks, a Leader's Guide, and a Participant's Study Guide. It's jam-packed with practical ideas and personal strategies for courage, determination, and resilience during challenging times like those of today. It can be used both in group settings (in-person or virtual) and by individuals at their own pace. And people are encouraged to take these resources home to share with family members.



The program is incredibly affordable – just \$2,400 for the entire organization. At pennies per person you will show your people that you really do care for them while also building a stronger and more resilient culture. It is easy to implement. You can load it onto your organization's learning management system or direct people to our website. And I promise you that you will see a positive impact. In fact, for some people the impact will be life-changing.

[Learn more at the Values Coach website](#)

"We did our first Conversations in Courage today! It went really well. We had 50+ participants and evals are all positive. We are planning on doing one every other week in 2021 until we have finished all 21 of the *Everyday Courage for Extraordinary Times* videos!"

Rosanne Raso, Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer
NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center

[Joe Tye](#) is Founder and CEO of Values Coach Inc. He is the author or coauthor of fifteen books and dozens of journal articles on leadership, culture, and personal success. He can be reached at Joe@ValuesCoach.com or by phone at 319-624-3889.

We are now accepting submissions for the second volume of Stay Strong For Us, which we will launch with gratitude at Thanksgiving 2021.

[Email me](#) for details.