

Jenny, PiAP:

Welcome to In This Moment Stories from the UNC Partnerships in Aging Program, a program designed to hear how people are managing and the time of COVID-19. On April 28th, we spoke with Brad B, who is 67 years old and lives in the triangle area of North Carolina. Thanks for being with us today.

Brad:

Pleasure.

Jenny, PiAP:

So tell us about your experience of this current time in our world since we've all been advised to stay at home and keep distance from others.

Brad:

Well, actually I've tried to stay at home and follow the rules as much as reasonably possible. I do get out to get essential things, food, gasoline, that sort of thing. I do walk a lot. I find that's very helpful for me. It's good for me physically. It's not unusual for me to walk like two and a half hours and do five or six miles walks. Um, and, uh, it's a good way to get out of the house. And if, depending on where you walk, you can often avoid crowds. I don't necessarily go to parks. It might be one of the state forests. It might be a quiet neighborhood, but I find that's very helpful.

Jenny, PiAP:

Those are some pretty long walks. I imagine you see a lot of interesting things along the way.

Brad:

Well, yeah, plus this sort of like Zen like. I mean, after a while you start walking and your mind wanders and then your mind doesn't wander. And it just starts thinking about walking, cause you don't want to trip over a root and that actually does help also.

Jenny, PiAP:

Nice. So tell us a little bit about, in your life experiences, anything that has prepared you or influenced you in how you're managing this time?

Brad:

Yes, yes, absolutely. Um, people who are in their sixties, um, lived through the, uh, AIDS HIV epidemic. And, uh, I'm a gay male and that was especially true. Uh, in the early eighties running up to the nineties, I did lose a lot of friends, or I shouldn't say a lot, some friends. Um, it was traumatic. Um, at first it was very frightening because they didn't give you, they didn't know enough to tell you what was dangerous and what wasn't. So you have to, you have to make a decision. Either you give into the fear and crawl into a rabbit hole and just hope you don't get it and tremble. Or what you do is you finally reached inside yourself and say, look, what we need to do is we need to take action collectively or individually on this. Panic and fear do not help. They hinder it, right? So what you do is, whatever it may be, call your friends, someone sick, go see him. If they're really sick, trying to help them. Do what you can. And if you do that, that will be your best bet. Your best choice is to face facts, do what you have to do and you'll increase your chances of you and everybody else getting through the epidemic.

Jenny, PiAP:

It strikes me that the HIV AIDS epidemic was quite a time of collective action. I'm wondering if you're seeing the same kinds of things happen in this situation?

Brad:

Yes, and no. Uh, the reason I say that is because there are obviously some people that are tremendously motivated. People who are doing things like making homemade mask for first responders. And, uh, even companies saying we're not going to make a poster anymore; we're going to start making, uh, scrubs. That kind of thing, which I'm very, very impressed with. Then unfortunately there are some people that are kind of in denial. Uh, they're saying, oh, it isn't that bad. Let's just open everything up and send kids to school and dah, dah, dah, which, uh, from all the medical advice indicates would be a really, really bad idea. So yes, I do see some very positive action, a lot of solidarity and that's most people. Uh, I just wish it would spill over to all people.

Jenny, PiAP:

What advice would you give future generations if they faced a situation such as this one that we're currently experiencing, maybe people who aren't even born yet, what would you tell them?

Brad:

Okay. Uh, one you're going to face it. Everybody's faced it. Um, I read a little blog, something about, and I'll expand that a little bit about these crises. You know, in my case, my grandparents fought World War II. Okay. Uh, my generation had to deal with polio and Vietnam and the AIDS crisis. And the millennials are having to deal with this. Uh, there will be other crises and there'll probably be other medical crisis. I can't see a time, not in the foreseeable future, that we'll be invulnerable to illness. So these things happen. They happened in 1918. They have in the 1950s, the 1980s. They're happening now. They'll happen again. And the only thing I can tell you is the better prepared you are, the better you'll be. And being prepared does not mean going on spring break to the beach, saying it's spring break and I'm going to the beach no matter what. That doesn't qualify as being prepared. Okay. You just need to be realistic about this.

Jenny, PiAP:

Okay. Brad, I'm wondering what you're most looking forward to resuming after this is over

Brad:

Having a good beer in a bar, get good beer here, but I mean, I'm serious. It's just like, how can I put this? Uh, it it'll be nice. To me, one of the big signs of normalcy is just saying, it's, I'm tired or I'm going to meet friends after work and we're going to have a couple of drinks. Something like that would really show me that things have gone back to normal.

Jenny, PiAP:

Great. Thank you so much for your time today. We appreciate you recording with us for In This Moment stories.

Brad:

You're more than welcome