

My dear colleagues,

Good morning. Welcome back to our remote learningscape. As Rabbi Akiva taught his followers, “It is not given to man to begin. That privilege is God’s alone. But it is given to man to begin again, and he does so every time he chooses to side with the living.” We are beginning again today; we are siding with the living we teach and with whom we share the bonds of family and community.

In this email, rather than share my thoughts and suggestions, I am sharing thoughts from two religious traditions as well as from two news sources. There is community in thinking together, which has drawn many of us to academic lives. With our students, we are co-creating these thinking communities, and it may be helpful to reflect on the places our teaching and learning communities have in the larger communities that help to define our lives.

This morning I woke to an email from Charter for Compassion, in which they shared the letter below from the Dalai Lama. Earlier this week, Allison Pease, our Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, shared the attached tips from the Chronicle on supporting students, and that same day (Monday), I received the link below to a Washington Post article on the importance of human connection. Sometimes communities emerge that are serendipitous; it’s been that kind of week for me.

With thanks to all who contributed, I encourage you to read these three pieces as time permits and to join this afternoon’s open conversation at 3 pm (details below).

Sending each of you and all of you collectively the strength and purpose and joy that connects us with learning and seeing this through.

30 March 2020

My dear brothers and sisters,

...[A]ncient Indian tradition describes the creation, abiding and destruction of worlds over time. Among the causes of such destruction are armed conflict and disease, which seems to accord with what we are experiencing today. However, despite the enormous challenges we face, living beings, including humans, have shown a remarkable ability to survive.

No matter how difficult the situation may be, we should employ science and human ingenuity with determination and courage to overcome the problems that confront us. Faced with threats to our health and well-being, it is natural to feel anxiety and fear. Nevertheless, I take great solace in the following wise advice to examine the problems before us: If there is something to be done—do it, without any need to worry; if there’s nothing to be done, worrying about it further will not help....

...[I] understand that as a result of the necessary lockdowns across the world, many people are facing tremendous hardship due to a loss of livelihood. For those with no stable income life is a daily struggle for survival. I earnestly appeal to all concerned to do everything possible to care for the vulnerable members of our communities.

I offer special gratitude to the medical staff—doctors, nurses and other support personnel—who are working on the frontline to save lives at great personal risk. Their service is indeed compassion in action.

With heartfelt feelings of concern for my brothers and sisters around the world who are passing through these difficult times, I pray for an early end to this pandemic so that your peace and happiness may soon be restored.

With my prayers,

[H.H. Dalai Lama]

Human connection bolsters the immune system. That's why it's more important than ever to be kind.

One of the many cruelties of the COVID-19 outbreak: In a time when we most need the comfort of closeness, it forces us apart. But decades of research suggests that kinship, even from a distance, can be a powerful balm.

Read in The Washington Post: <https://apple.news/A9hs6NPZsRfqIzRL8HNomSA>

TLC Weekly Open Conversation

Thursday, April 2, 3pm

Today's open conversation will be co-hosted with Matthew Perry, Associate to the Provost for Faculty. We invite questions, comments, suggestions, and sharing. Please respect others' needs to be heard and to listen and to be validated in their thoughts and feelings.

To Join: <https://zoom.us/j/393922152>

Please note that we are asking you to register to gain access to the session. You can register by clicking on the link above and completing a brief form. This is one of several settings we are enacting to protect our conversations and your security.

Be well. Be safe. Be connected.

Gina