



疫 中 有 情 斷捨離的雋語

Love amidst the pandemic-
Reflecting on Quarantine
“Decluttering”

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生活於香港這個大都市的市民，大都聽過「斷捨離」這個名詞。「斷捨離」源自於日本，意為「斷絕不需要的東西、捨去多餘的物品、脫離對物品的執著」。傳染病防控工作，大致也有類似的概念：第一，切斷傳播鏈；第二，分隔受感染／密切接觸的群體；第三，減少重症和死亡率。這三者互為影響，密不可分，例如：分隔受感染／密切接觸的群體，才能更有效地切斷傳播鏈，從而減少受感染人數和所引致的重症及死亡率。這個概念對於住宿服務員工來講，可以用耳熟能詳、駕輕就熟來形容。在過往日子裏，無論流感還是近年的新冠病毒，此法均屢試不爽，卓有成效。

As a citizen of a thriving metropolis such as Hong Kong, most of you must have heard of the term “decluttering”. Originating from Japan, the term “decluttering” refers to the habit of distancing oneself with unnecessary items, discarding excess, and removing one’s attachment to material items. This shares a similar concept with infectious disease prevention and control. First, the chain of transmission has to be severed. Then, the infected/close contact groups are to be separated. Finally, severe cases and mortality rate are reduced. These three steps are interdependent and inseparable with each other. For example, separating the infected / with close contact groups can effectively cut off the chain of transmission, thereby reducing the number of infection and its resulting severe cases and mortality rate. This is a concept that our accommodation staff is familiar and accustomed to. Whether it is during a flu season or the recent COVID-19 pandemic, this is a tried and tested approach.

與病毒賽跑

回望2月初，全港疫情急劇升溫。Omicron 潛伏期，尚未出現病症，快速測試也仍陰性的時候，病毒已無聲無息進入院舍。而病毒極快的傳播速度、極強的傳播性，遠遠超乎預期。短短數日，確診院友數字已幾何級上升。更意想不到的是，全副裝備的員工也逐一中招。另一邊廂，外界的防疫配套和機制不勝負荷，瀕臨崩潰，例如：核酸檢測結果嚴重滯後、社區隔離檢疫設施爆滿、醫療設施/急症床位需輪候極長時間等等。當其時，尚未有「原址檢疫」的政策，因此，確診的院友和員工需要隔離治療，密切接觸的院友和員工需要檢疫安置。但是，群體生活的院舍要如何檢疫呢？隨著越來越多院舍院友染疫，還有哪些設施、人員和配套仍可支援院舍呢？

救亡與救贖

幾經波折，在會方向政府部門極力爭取後，第一間院舍有染疫的院友得以送院，而部份密切接觸的院友和員工終於得以撤離至隔離設施。如是者，由第一位院友染疫，直至成功全部送院/撤離的院舍中，最快的等待了3日，最慢的等待了整整11日。等待部門安排撤離的同時，各院舍也積極自救，各謀出路。其中一間院舍，疫症在其中一半院友中快速蔓延，但另一半的院友卻連續幾天快速測試均為陰性。為了保護未有染疫的院友，也令留守的員工可以集中照顧受感染的院友，我們做了一個大膽的決定：將未染疫的院友撤離至另一間正空置的院舍（該空置院舍的院友和員工剛撤離至隔離設施/醫院）。然而事與願違，撤離當日仍陰性的院友們，入住的第二天也陸續開始病發……

黎明前的黑暗

俗語有云：「巧婦難為無米之炊」，意思是：即使非常靈巧的人，做事缺乏資源，也難以完成。極速蔓延的疫情，加上外在環境惡劣、防疫物資一度匱乏，對於一眾抗疫員工，如同身處煉獄中的戰場。曾經一度奮勇上陣的，無論留守閉環的「死士」，還是借調支援的「勇士」，也在四面楚歌下，深深體會「叫天不應，叫地不聞」的窘境。有一間院舍，未及第二梯隊換班，第一批留守的員工已全部染疫。是進是退，或留或走？老子《道德經》曰：「善者不辯」。世紀疫症當前，還能聆聽心的聲音，願意尊重不同人的抉擇，這份寬容和接納，造就抗疫路上最大的共鳴！

轉眼已是人間四月天，鳥語花香，芬香滿徑。染疫的院友和員工已大都康復，由醫院/隔離設施陸續回來。他們面上的笑容依舊，熟悉的聲音一如既往地響亮。撤離的，或者未能幸免染疫；無法捨棄的，卻是我們的關係與愛；即使離開，總是為了回來。頓然醒悟，原來「斷捨離」從來不是目的，只是手段，為的是留存更寶貴的東西。第五波的疫情風浪中，你是否也經歷了「斷捨離」的跌宕起伏？你留住了寶貴的東西嗎？



“負傷的治療者
沒有沉默，言語也失去意義；
沒有聆聽，話語再不能醫治。
—— 盧雲神父《始於寧謐處》”

Racing against the virus

Looking back at early February, cases of infection are rising sharply in Hong Kong. During its incubation period, when symptoms were yet to be developed and results on rapid tests were shown to be negative, the Omicron variant entered hostels silently without forewarning. The spread of the virus was incredibly fast and its contagiousness far exceeded expectations. In just a few days, the number of infected residents rose exponentially. What was even more unexpected was that our fully-equipped staff became infected one-by-one. In the meantime, the pandemic prevention system was overwhelmed and on the verge of collapse. For example, nucleic acid test results were severely delayed, community isolation and quarantine facilities were full, and the queue for medical resources/emergency hospitalisation were extremely long. At the same time, since the 'On-site Quarantine' policy was yet to be introduced, residents and staff who were diagnosed needed to be isolated, while those who had close contact with the group needed to be placed under quarantine. The question was, where could they be accommodated? With more residents falling ill, where else could we find the facilities, staff and resources to support the operation of our hostels?

2月11日，第一間出現染疫的院舍院友撤離往亞博隔離設施。由於該院舍員工陸續染疫，或成為密切接觸者需要檢疫，其他院舍員工義不容辭，護送院友前往亞博，並協助照顧工作。

On 11 February, residents from the first infected hostel were evacuated to the AWE. As the staff of the hostel fell ill one after the other, or became close contacts of the infected and hence were sent to be quarantined, our remaining staff dutifully escorted the residents to the Asia World Expo and assisted in care work.

Darkness before dawn

As the idiom says, “even a clever cook cannot make rice without grains”. However clever and skillful a person may be, certain tasks cannot be accomplished without the necessary conditions. With the pandemic quickly spreading, an unfavourable external environment and momentous lack of pandemic prevention supplies, health workers found themselves in a purgatory-like battlefield. For those who had been on the front line, whether they remained in enclosed facilities, or volunteered to assist, they all faced the same helpless predicament. One of our hostels, all staff on the first roster were infected before the second roster began. In a situation like this, should our staff stay, or should they go? As Lao Tzu says in Tao Te Ching, “The wise do not argue.” Faced with the pandemic of the century, those who can still listen to their inner voice and be willing to respect the choices of others can bring about the greatest resonance with their tolerance and acceptance!

In the blink of an eye, it is already April. The birds are singing and flowers are blossoming. Most infected residents and staff have recovered and are gradually returning from hospitals/quarantine facilities. Their smiles and their familiar voices remain the same. Those who went into isolation may not be able to remain uninfected, but our relationship and love cannot be isolated so easily. Departure only created an opportunity for return. It is then I realised that “decluttering” was a means, but not an end, its purpose was to preserve things that are far more precious to us. During the fifth wave of the pandemic, have you also experienced the ups and downs of “decluttering”? Have you preserved what is precious to you?

“The wounded healer
Without silence, words lost their meaning;
Without listening, words can no longer heal.
—— Father Henri Nouwen, "From Tranquility”

Salvation & Liberation

After much struggle, the Society liaised with the government departments to evacuate infected residents from the first hostel to the hospital. Some of the residents and staff who had been in close contact with the infected were sent to the quarantine facility as well. From the first resident falling ill until all affected residents were sent to the hospital / evacuated, the quickest case took 3 days, while the slowest waited for 11 days. While awaiting the departments to arrange quarantine, our hostels had also actively sought ways to manage by themselves. In one of our hostels, the pandemic quickly spread among half of its residents, yet the other half remained to appear negative in the tests for a few days in a row. To protect residents that were not infected, while allowing our remaining staff to focus on taking care of the infected, we made a bold decision: to relocate uninfected residents to another vacant facility (the residents and staff of that vacant facility were sent to quarantine facilities / hospitals). However, things were less than ideal, on the second day of relocation, virus spread among residents who tested negative on the day that they moved ...

已清空的院舍，院友們
餵養的盆栽和龜，靜靜
等候家人們的歸來。後
記：第一間染疫撤離的
院舍，院友由2月23日
開始陸續回歸。

Our residents' potted plants and turtles quietly waited for the return of the residents in an emptied hostel. Postscript: Residents from the first quarantined hostel began to return from 23 February onwards.

