

Today it feels like things are happening to you versus for or around you. A burgeoning new collection of masks most likely dot your homescape, reminders to place them back across your face once you leave the car to head into the store. A store where you once knew where everything was now is overrun by newcomers and those intent on bucking the new world and system we find ourselves in. If your skin is Black, the voyage is much harder, as the virus hits us hardest. We tend to take the positions of those deemed essential, but only when our lives are on the line. Something about this time and place is different. Could it be that those not Black and POC have gotten a taste of systemic marginalization in these last few months? That \$1200 to \$1700 check wasn't enough to cover those rainy days we are to prepare for or to purchase those boots with the straps we hear so much about? Many of us are moving through this space with a partner at our side. It's a beautiful thing to navigate the peaks and valleys of this world with someone who understands. But sometimes, because the world can leave everything as nails, we grow into hammers against those within our spaces. How can we go loudly into that good fight and not turn our weapons on each other? Below, I list a few takeaways to try at home. I'll also be including notes for those of us who may be single at this time.

### **Shift Forward**

Fighting for our sanity in the face of an ever-changing political and cultural landscape will take a toll on any unit. So how does one avoid subbing in your partner for the world? One thought is to shift your energy forward. Share with one another the fear you have and what it stems from. Living out this life in a Black or brown body comes with its fair share of hardships. Having someone there to listen to those aches can shift focus from what's not being understood in the world to what's plain and simple at home. This does indeed require active communication. One cannot assume we know the plight because we share a tone. Each of us has a story all our own, with its own nuances, levels and understandings. Being heard as well as hearing plays an integral part in making home a restful place for the weary.

Being single in the age of Corona is a double-edged sword. Whether a single parent to a pet or human(s), going out into the world can feel like a greater risk as it's just you. It's just you gathering the grocery items, lugging the 16-count paper towel pack to the house. May be just you ordering the masks, takeout or even writing up protest signage and donation requests. I know the feeling. What I've done, instead of diving into yet another project to distract me from me, is allow myself to be present in this moment. I've dialed back my social media usage so I'm not constantly digesting Black trauma. I've shared with my coworkers that there are days that

I'm not okay and I deserve room to feel those emotions. I've taken up more space in my singlehood even more than when I was partnered, so my presence looms larger as I stand in the light. Shifting focus to what you need to thrive along with how to survive in this time is a revolutionary act. Do not allow anyone to pull focus from what you need to be well during this time.

### **See Each Other Where You Stand/See Where You Stand**

Has there ever been a moment when you're reminded of how your partner looks? Even at surface level, the mind forgets what is routinely in its focus, lighting up when something or someone new comes into our line of sight. We can see our person without fully seeing them, and that vision can tend to fade, unintentionally and otherwise, over time. Things for your partner may have changed recently. The stress of this new livelihood may even have them looking at themselves in a new light. One of the most powerful acts of love that can be done in this time is seeing, truly seeing them, where they stand currently. Perhaps battle-worn, with a fervor activated through trial. As I shared with a friend of mine while chatting about when things would get back to "normal", normal as we knew it no longer exists. Many of us have shed old selves that have been holding on to old forms. Like a snake molting yet refusing to release its old skin. During quarantine, we may have grown bigger or smaller, found a new niche or completed an old project, rejected old thought patterns and actively worked to build new ones. Many of us have done nothing and everything at once. If partnered, you are reintroducing yourself in a multitude of ways.

If single, do you see where you are? Both physically as well as metaphysically? Can you see the sand between your toes even as you stand in your work boots? What are you allowing yourself to hear about you? What beliefs are you choosing to stand firm in that involve you? What's *your* new normal? How does it feel? Does it scare you? Worry you? Provoke you to take charge or hang back? Is your intuition more heightened than before? Good. You're right where you're supposed to be. The wars haven't ended and your resolve to win has only increased. Learn when to fight and when to rest. Do both with intention.

### **Create Daily Rituals**

Prepping to go out into the world requires a routine, now more than ever. Shower. Brush your teeth. Pick out our mask. Remember your latex gloves. Grab extra wipes. Hand sanitizer attached to your bag or keychain. Disinfect your keys. Take your immune booster and/or

multivitamin. If you have a full household, double or even triple that workload before crossing the threshold. It's a lot. With that said, how often is meditation added to that list? How long has it been since you remembered to take a full breath?

Tonight or whenever you're reading this, steal some moments for you to ground yourself. Pull away from the laptop, schedule, screaming people for a bit to reset. Place a glass of spring water on your windowsill to collect the rays of the moon. Speak into the water all the affirmations you're seeking to manifest in your life. Drink it in the morning.

### **Listen to your body**

The simple things are what we tend to neglect when under stress. It's our mind's way of holding on to control. Our bodies know the pangs of warning, even when it doesn't know the cause. To meet our bodies where they are, take the time to listen. Firstly, go pee when you have to pee! Yes, your position may be comfortable and moving would only be one more thing added to the list of things to do, but holding on to your urine brings more pressure and stress to the body, as well as holding in toxins that need to be released. Speaking of elimination, hydrate, hydrate, hydrate. Drinking enough water during the day can aid with flushing out your system as well as boosting your mood. A dehydrated body is an overworked body. Hydrating with water and/or tea is a welcome love note to your system. Need to move to expend stuck energy? Create a joint playlist that serves as a flag for the two of you. An audio respite in a time of trouble. As a single Black woman, my Spotify playlist consists of self-love anthems ranging from Top 40 hits to Broadway showtunes. One that hits me right in the feels every time I need reminding of my power even as I'm alone is "Holy" by Jamila Woods. It pulls at the place in me that grew up believing all things holy are outside of me, instead of resting beneath my skin. Play your songs as tribute to yourself and each other.

Remember sleep? More so a sleep schedule? Whether nighttime is now in the middle of the day, get in as much rest as you can. Try not to over-do it, as that will cause more problems in the long run. But do rest on purpose when your body calls for it as best you can.

### **Check in with your ancestors**

We are our ancestors. The warriors that met faces on the battlefields of existence on every plane. In Tulsa. In Seneca. During Tuskegee. Under the horrendous knife of Sims. Now more than ever, our ancestors are warring for us on the other side as we tear down monuments to our demise in this realm. I'm originally from Richmond, VA, the original capital of the confederacy.

For Juneteenth, I walked the Africal Ancestral Burial Ground with libation and offering. After a while, I just sat there, taking in the energy vibrating from the ground. A friend said it must have been heavy. I told her isn't wasn't. She looked surprised. Instead, I told her the ground was moving, as if our ancestors buried there were raising up together, banging on tables, clapping and clasping hands to say we're finally doing it: revolting without fear. With Ancestor veneration and reverence, there is recognition. An understanding that though they may no longer be here in the physical, their legacies - the ones bought and sold in blood, riches, feast and famine - live on in us at cellular levels. Connecting to our dead ones is honestly a means to connect with ourselves. We honor by paying tribute and libation. We chatted above about hydrating and thriving in the midst of struggle. I encourage you to place a glass of spring water and a white candle on a flat, raised surface and call in your Ancestors of love, light and power for a talk. Prepare to meet levels of yourself in that space. Connection is here to be had.

Whether partnered with another or self-partnered, understand there will be moments of loneliness in every capacity. I know the feeling of being alone with a warm body laying next to me. There is safety in acknowledging that the inklings of being alone may be here for a bit, but lonely we are not. The flipside is being so full of someone that you lose grasp of yourself, which reveals a level of codependency that can render a loneliness deeper than simply "feeling" alone. As home continues to evolve, the landscape of this nation begins to crumble, there is still a home which to return. Home is you.