

TOUCH by Joan N., tenant, May 19, 2020

"If I never cry, I never get held". This was a saying among persons participating in a 12 Step Group for divorced and separated years ago. Being strong was a muscled response of a person left, (most often a woman), to take on the responsibilities of raising children as a single parent. I remember a woman sharing "when I turn the corner," she said, "and see the lights in the windows on the nights the group is meeting, I feel an instant release of all my tensions." She explained, "It is like coming home". Home, safe, accepted, supported and loved. Yes, and it's alright to cry. Tears are acceptable. That's what humans do. Add to that a hug and you've touched a full human experience.

Recently, when someone became ill, my first response was to reach out to take her hand. To touch her. To comfort, reassure her. Bang! Instantly I drew back as "6 feet apart" flashed through my mind. The impact left me puzzled. Now, when we need to be touched, when we need consolation, reassurance in our fears, we are told that distance is mandatory for survival. This inconsistency is troubling. Unless, of course, to survive this pandemic, we must learn new ways of touching, communicating, being present to one another, comforting and supporting. Thus, we have become the Skypers and the Zoomers. Included in these also, all who serve "from a distance". Our local officials, food suppliers, medical and science researchers, our families, children who shop for us and deliver food and supplies at the front desk. Given more thought, I'm sure we could add to the list of those who are "present in the distance". Those who touch us in so many ways without whom we could not handle the weight of restrictions along with our own limitations and fears? We are learning to reach out and to touch and be touched from a distance. Which we are discovering, is not a bad thing. Distance calls us to take the initiative, to allow our fears to gradually reveal to us the truth of our vulnerability to a virus that is proving oblivious to our suffering. Yet. at the same time, exposing our common human need for connection, for acceptance, and for "keeping in touch" in new and creative ways.

"If I never cry, I never get hugged." Giving permission for people to love us is the cue. Just ask. Love will always find us and fill up the spaces between us....hugs!