

2020 Survival Guide

A Healer's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

by Vivien Schapera

It was like driving along a road, at high speed, and then “Bang!” The road in front blew up, and I had to come to a screeching halt. The shock was immense. I watched with a sinking heart as the world crashed down around me – *my* world and *the* world – both!

I work as a healer – hands-on work that doesn't lend itself to masks, gowns, and deep cleaning – a profession that was highly unlikely to be given survival resources for the pandemic, because it isn't even recognized as a profession yet. To make matters worse, I'd been working on a project for five years, and it was about to culminate when the pandemic hit. I had been looking forward to getting back to a more normal work routine, and a more balanced life, and then suddenly, there was nothing to go back to.

One of my little sayings is that you can't “go back,” you can only “go forward.” Another little saying that I have is: “The good thing and the bad thing is always the same thing.” This derives from, but isn't exactly the same as, the Buddhist philosophy that everything is neutral. It was time to walk my talk.

Three Premonitions

Yes, I work as a healer, and yes, I am intuitive. Does this mean that I knew the pandemic was coming? No – I did not! But I was aware “something” was coming. I did “know” there was going to be a stock market crash, and I was expecting the bottom to drop out of the oil market, but I had no inkling of the trigger.

I did receive three impressions of the coming landscape. Intuitive information, when it is for myself, often presents as random thoughts that make no sense, bypassing my consciousness, and adding themselves to the end of my spoken sentences. I had three such premonitions:

“I'm going to finish this book and then I'm going to collapse for three weeks.” I had no idea what this could possibly mean. Finishing a book is a frenetic time, with many new tasks to accomplish. How, when and why was I going to *collapse* for three weeks?

“I think for the rest of this year, I will cut the number of sessions I give per day down to about three.” This was nonsensical. What was I going to do – tell half of my clients that I couldn't see them anymore because I didn't feel like it? And which of them could I choose to say such hurtful words to?

“Don't spend your savings on getting the book done. You're going to need that money after it's finished.” This was absurd! Once the book was finished, there were going to be all kinds of new income opportunities, and on a bigger, better scale too. And it wasn't “fair.” I had set aside money, so I could take time off to write, and also to pay for costs associated with printing and

publishing the book. Yet the voice in my mind was saying “no” on using the money in the very way I had *carefully* planned to allocate it. Oh boy, was I going to be glad that I’d listened to myself on this one!

Fast forward to the beginning of March, 2020. Just a few more weeks to go and the book would indeed be done. I couldn’t wait. Twenty years of research and five years of writing would yield a true textbook in the field of Energy Healing! We were nearly there, all we had to do was build the index, tweak some photos and diagrams, complete the proofing process and we would cross the finish line.

The first pandemic alarm bell came from a client. “Viv,” he said, “*Coronavirus!* It’s going to get me.” I was taken by surprise. He’s a levelheaded businessman, with his finger on the pulse, and *he* feared the virus? And because he is a levelheaded businessman, with his finger on the pulse, I knew to take him seriously. The second came from another client, who lives in Boston, an oncologist at a prestigious hospital, married to a South Korean. He sent out an email outlining how to prepare for the pandemic, and what to expect. As I read the email, I could feel myself go cold. Very cold. Things looked grim ... for the whole world. Usually I wait for three signs ... but this situation had already far surpassed “signs from the universe.” It was time to get real. Getting “real” meant heeding the warnings, going into isolation, and educating my clients that they should consider doing so too. Fortunately, I live in Ohio, where the governor wasted no time in developing a statewide pandemic response, and all of OH went into an official lockdown together, about a week after my own isolation response began. All my lofty plans for this year were crushed, but survival must come first.

So, what *do* you do when the road in front of you blows up? The answer is actually easy – get a map of the region and plot a new route.

The New Map

I used three resources to chart my new course: history, astrology and nature.

1. History Repeats Itself

To understand the terrain, I began to read up on the 1918 Spanish ‘Flu Pandemic. My traditional academic qualifications are in psychology and, like it or not, behavior faithfully follows statistical patterns. I wanted to see how long the pandemic lasted, and how people behaved during that time. I also wanted to see what went right and what went wrong, especially as viewed through the 20:20 lens of hindsight. (20:20 in 2020!)

I was struck by two features: During the Spanish ‘Flu people *wanted* to isolate and social distance, because the symptoms were *so visible* and *so scary* – namely those who contracted the ‘flu bled from the nose and mouth. In contrast, with COVID-19, we have a – and pre-symptomatic carriers, and reactions ranging from zero to fatal. From the psychological point of view this is a disaster for two reasons: a) Our instincts are biologically hard-wired only to

respond to an immediate and palpable threat. To respond to future threat, we have to use our cognitive capacities, namely our conscious minds, and we have to act rationally, not emotionally. b) Psychologically-speaking, when we don't like our reality, we go into denial. Having such a range of possible responses to the virus, generates the perfect recipe for "it's not going to happen to me" kind of thinking.

I also noted, with dismay, that when WWI ended, people were allowed out on the streets to celebrate. This caused a second wave of the Spanish 'Flu that apparently killed more than the first wave. People can only take isolation, and being ordered what to do, for so long ... and then they rebel. I wondered what the trigger would be that would draw the crowds out. Considering the mood and world events in 2020, it clearly wasn't going to be *a celebration*.

I was very concerned. I had learned in Social Psychology that people can tolerate the gap between rich and poor when all are "in it together." When all thrive together, that's great. When all sink together, that's just how it is. When the gap gets bigger, that means trouble. If the rich are getting richer, while the poor are getting poorer, there will be social unrest. The difference between the capacity for many to continue working and earning, whilst others were fired and furloughed was, to my mind, cause for alarm.

The short term looked dire. With regard to the long term, I did reflect on the fact that clearly the world did recover from the 1918 pandemic and at some point, everyone (who had survived) resumed "normal" life.

I also contemplated how difficult the 21st century has been so far. From September 11, 2001 to the Great Recession, to the 2020 pandemic. Then I contemplated the start of the 20th Century and realized how "difficult" the first 45 years of the 20th Century had been!

2. Astrology

I don't get a daily horoscope and I don't really subscribe to that kind of relationship with astrology. I do have great respect for how the discipline can provide a chart which indicates trends and cycles, and fertile and infertile periods. I am very faithful to two astrological dynamics, that I use for building my calendar, namely when the moon is void of course, and when Mercury is in retrograde. I'm also very interested in the content of individual charts when they have been researched and interpreted by a qualified astrologer.

What I did notice was that the virus spikes, as predicted by computer models with their fancy algorithms, were aligning with when Mercury would be going retrograde. It was going to be interesting to see whether this alignment was going to play out.

Apparently, astrologers had predicted a "black swan" event in 2020. A black swan is an unforeseen phenomenon with massive impact. Well, that certainly seemed to fit the bill, but how long was this supposed to last?

A close friend of mine had gone to a respected astrologer back in 2017, and received one of those scary, doomsday readings, especially with regard to her finances and businesses. She was in for a long, tough cycle. In the hopes of hearing better news, she had gone to another astrologer in 2019, only to have her hopes for improvement dashed. 2020 looked bleak for her. She kept seeking a culprit, and I kept redirecting her thinking: "It's not any one person," I repeatedly said, "it's the landscape. You're just going to have to mitigate this as best you can, and focus on building for when you come out of this cycle." Sure enough, this friend of mine is in property management and most of the properties are rented to restaurants. With the lockdown, doomsday had indeed arrived. While it was frightening to see the astrological trend come to fruition, there was one reassuring note – all was happening in accordance. There was helpful information to be gleaned. "When does this horrible cycle in your chart end?" I asked. The answer was: "February 2021."

February 2021? That sounded right -- in alignment with history, computer model predictions, vaccine forecasts and plain common sense. "A whole year of this?" Or "Oh, only a year? A year goes quickly!" Our reaction depends on so many variables, but in the end, many of us (but not all) *can choose* which attitude to adopt. Most importantly, the more people who could accept, as quickly as possible, that this wouldn't be a "3-months and then it's over" situation, the better.

3. Nature

My husband and I love nature. When our eldest son died suddenly from ventricular fibrillation, we turned to gardening to heal our souls. We transformed our back yard into a beautiful sanctuary. Sitting on our deck, we are surrounded by peace and serenity. It is my favorite place on the planet, and how lucky am I that it is my own back yard! Little did I know what a detailed metaphor our garden was going to become for my COVID-19 experience.

With no income for a gardening budget, I was going to have to forego the annuals, or plant my own seeds. I opted for the seeds. And that's where the metaphor begins. Seeds take up time and space, and require daily care. Compared to buying seedlings, or ready-made hanging baskets, they're a pain. However, they cost a fraction of the price. Just figuring out which seeds to buy – who knew there are so many different kinds of impatience – turned into a research project. Then there was sowing the seeds, keeping them warm enough, giving them enough light, hardening them off, and then planting them. Never will I take buying seedlings for granted again. What usually takes two to three days, began in early April and is still in process now, at the end of June! Well that fits right in! Everything during lockdown first came to a grinding halt, and then inch-by-painful-inch took three to ten times the amount of time and effort to accomplish.

Then came the road works in our sub-division. "Aargh," I groaned when I saw them hammering in the signposts, "More disruption! I'm not sure how much of this I can take." What I didn't know was that the roadwork was going to threaten my beloved fairy rose bush. When I went to

inspect the front corner of our property, on a regular walk-around, I was horrified to see that this beautiful harbinger of summer was dying.

In the meantime, all the other plants and flowers were also being threatened by an invasion. A mother deer and her newborn fawn had taken up residence in our backyard and were systematically munching on our flowers. Budding pansies, roses and hydrangeas, even the perennial geraniums, were being beheaded at a rate of knots.

I hit rock bottom. My solace had turned into a source of misery. I spent three days in a funk, and despising myself for it, too. “Jeez, Vivien,” I thought, “others have dire threats to life and livelihood, at this time, and you’re depressed about *your yard*?” I felt awful. I needed to honor how I felt *and* I needed to get a grip. Of course, I’m sufficiently well-versed in psychology to understand that I was projecting my upset about the pandemic onto my garden, and that I just needed time to let my emotions, particularly my frustrations, sort themselves out.

Many years ago, a client had shared with me her sister’s wisdom: Sometimes we just need to sit and stare. I turned to just sitting, like a lump, on my deck. Paralyzed. And after a while I began to stare as well. And then sitting and staring turned into reflection. And reflection turned into insight, and insight turned into action.

I realized that not having seedlings to plant had saved me from something else. For the first time ever, in our climate zone, there was frost after Mother’s Day. Because I didn’t have any, I didn’t lose any. The frost *had* bitten all the buds on my extraordinary early bloomer, a prolific climbing rose. But the new buds were forming and though late, the climber would bloom as joyously as ever. The impatiens seeds would also turn into a blaze of color, perhaps only as late as the fall, but they would turn into a fabulous display.

I forced myself to go and examine the fairy rose. I clipped away the dead leaves and flowers, praying that the roadwork hadn’t damaged the roots. After a week when no more of the bush was dying, we were able to ascertain that the bush itself wasn’t damaged. Concrete dust from the road works had burned two swathes across the top, but the bush was so lush, that it was *still* glorious. Meanwhile, at the back, even the hostas were recovering from the deer damage. Where there’s life, there’s hope.

What did all these nature signs mean? The late frost seemed to align with the black swan – a new and unexpected occurrence that would nonetheless yield, in time, to the usual laws and patterns of nature. The burned rose bush seemed to align with the thought that as long as the foundation, or roots, aren’t fatally destroyed, after a few years of growth, the damage will heal. And as for the doe and her fawn? It turned out that there were three does, and six fawns taking turns to camp in our yard. We love animals and recognize their right to walk our land. There is no way to say who is the interloper. The point is moot, it is time to share. Instead of cursing their presence, we got out our cameras and began taking photos to express our love of life itself on Facebook.

How did these sayings, premonitions and maps mesh with “real” life? Good question, because the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

The Garden

The garden provided a very accurate reflection of what was going on with my book project. This shouldn't come as a surprise, because the garden is also my creation and is an outer manifestation of my energy. As per the premonition, I did collapse for three weeks. I went into shock and festered in lockdown limbo, ping-ponging between anxiety and depression.

As with the seeds vs. the seedlings, I had to accept the delays. Everything was just going to take much longer, require more work, more patience and different strategies than previously envisaged. I won't lie – it was a slog. Getting the book finished turned into a nightmare, because everything had to be done remotely. Instead of sitting together with the artist, the photographer and the indexer, we had to do Zoom conference calls, emails, texts, and photos of marked up pages. It was painstaking and time-consuming. Dealing with the printers was a whole other story. I'll just say that instead of the printing taking another two weeks, it took another eight weeks. Plus, there would be no book party, no launch, no celebration – not this year, anyway.

The weather patterns reflected what was going on in my private practice and teaching. After lockdown, I just sat on the deck wondering how to handle my situation. I was wondering how to apply my skills, who to help. The voice in my head kept saying: “Don't jump into the fray. Don't spring into action. Don't do anything, just wait and see. It isn't time yet.”

April was unusually warm and I was itching to begin planting. “Surely it isn't going to get cold again?” I thought. “Follow the rules,” said the voice in my head, “no annuals until after Mother's Day.”

“What about work?” I wondered, “Shouldn't I be trying to earn money?”

“Just wait and see,” said the voice, “You've taken a long time building your businesses. You have sown many seeds, built many tributaries. The foundation and the structure are resilient. Just let it unfold.”

That was hard. I'm a person of action – action is what makes me feel better. But I listened to the voice in my head, because I could. My premonition not to spend my sabbatical money on getting the book done had saved us. Because I had been warned off spending that money, I had instead raised the money for printing the book by getting my students to pre-order their copies. The book is a full-color textbook, with photos and diagrams, so the printing was very expensive – as is the book. It would have been a disaster to try and sell the book in the prevailing economy, but enough orders were already in, ahead of the crash, to fund the printing.

I *could* afford to just wait and see what unfolded. And what unfolded was that a proportion of my clients wanted to continue their sessions remotely. I've always done some remote work, but only as a very small percentage of my weekly schedule. My nervous system was wrecked by

book frustrations and pandemic shock, but these clients were working on the front line and needed my support, so I said “Yes.” Then, since *everything* was happening remotely, my clients who are dotted around the country started calling to ask if I was perhaps giving remote sessions. I said “Yes.” Additionally, clients living in other countries began contacting me, to find out if I was giving remote sessions, as well as unknown people, contacting me via social media, asking for remote sessions. I said “Yes.” Soon I was up to 50% of my pre-lockdown schedule, and that was as much as I could manage. Remote work makes a different demand on the nervous system, requiring a major adjustment. I was indeed down to “about three people per day” per the premonition! Additionally, “the good thing and the bad thing *was* the same thing.” When I closed my door in Cincinnati, the whole world opened up to me.

Likewise, the garden. We had done so much work and investment in the previous seven years, that we didn’t *need* the annuals to create a beautiful space. We assessed what would bring us extra joy and brighten our hearts, took \$50 and bought some pansies and ranunculi to usher in the spring with a splash of color. For the rest, handsome, mature plants filled our yard, front and back and we watched with pleasure as they leafed and budded. When the record-breaking frost occurred after Mother’s Day, I thanked my inner voice for guiding me to “follow the rules.” Not only that, as the seeds I had bought began to develop, I discovered many self-seeded impatience, from last year’s garden, coming up in the pots dotted under the trees.

With regard to our other work – namely the newly printed book, our crystal healing website and our healing courses – we decided that the best thing to do, would be to make a series of experiential videos, relevant to both the pandemic, and to our crystal healing students who wanted to learn how to work remotely. We went down to our office where our YouTube studio is, and got to work. We began with a *Crystal Surgery Meditation to Boost the Immune System and Becoming Centered and Grounded after Shock*, and progressed to *Soothing the Soul and Restoring Peace of Mind in Stressful Times*. I couldn’t touch people with my hands, but I still wanted to reach out and touch people with my heart.

History and Astrology

Both history and astrology are proving to be helpful maps for tracking what we can expect. As I write, the people have indeed surged onto the streets *en masse*, and coronavirus cases *are* spiking alarmingly during Mercury in Retrograde. Human nature is what it is. We can’t control other people ... but we can learn how to control ourselves. We can learn how to sort through our emotions and our psychology, and become conscious beings making rational choices. If you can learn to control yourself, you can learn how to control your life.

Survival Guide

Navigating 2020 is a challenge for each and every one of us. It is helpful to establish a personal rule book. Here are some ideas:

Buckle in for the long haul. This isn't going to evaporate just because we're "over it," or "had enough," or "can't take any more!" We are living through history-in-the-making, and it is a very bumpy ride. There will be anger and there will be violence – violent words, violent images and violent actions. Decide now not to be one of the sheep, lest you become a sacrificial lamb, sacrificed in the name of social change. Think for yourself, even while being tolerant and compassionate toward others. Plot your own route to 2021, and plan to arrive safely.

Set good safety boundaries. This is a pandemic. There is no crystal or food or energy practice that can protect us from a virus. Yes, those can help the condition of our immune systems, and support us in many excellent ways, but they can't stop us from catching the virus if we are exposed to it. This is a time to be grateful for science. Let's rather be guided by the experts who are doing their best to find out as much as they can, *to help us*. It is wiser to ensure minimum exposure than to take risks based on beliefs, and it is wiser to err on the side of caution.

Face your demons. The worst part about lockdown was that we could no longer get away from ourselves ... and our unfinished business. When you can't run off to work, or the gym, or a party, then you're stuck at home with all your dirty laundry and everything you've swept under the carpet. This was depressing in itself. Even if you do only a tiny bit, day-by-day, chipping away at the backlog does deliver a whole new sense of self.

Don't make others wrong to prove to yourself that you are right. We're all miserable, ejected from our lives, and struggling to choose between the lesser of two evils. The bitter truth is that nobody knows what's best – because there isn't a "best." There is only evaluating "what's worse." This *is* the bottom of the barrel. Don't join in the fray at the bottom of the barrel where *nothing* is right. Rather head upwards toward the light. And here's a great way to begin: Be respectful. If we want others to respect our opinion, let's begin by respecting theirs. You will be amazed how much better it feels to walk away from "right and wrong" and flow with what is.

Don't believe the media. The media have turned to creating the news instead of reporting the news. We are swamped with fake news, doctored images and propaganda. Distinguish very carefully between opinion, commentary and journalism. If like me, you do want and need to know what's happening, read reports by journalists who are publishing *outside* your country, free of domestic political affiliations.

Use social media wisely to support your inner being. Many of us turned to social media to "see" our friends and connect with our community. We could also learn, see interesting sights and even travel the world virtually-speaking. Of course, social media is also the platform for influencing, and so we couldn't avoid seeing horrifying images and reports as well. Social media gives you the opportunity to rapidly create your own reality. It is up to you how you are affected by social media. You can protect yourself by hiding, blocking and unfollowing whatever offends you. You can also use social media to send out messages of love and humor. Observe what helps and what hinders, and build your page and presence to please and support yourself.

Acknowledge your survivor guilt. Survivor guilt is a very real dynamic. If you are personally able to weather this storm relatively intact, count your blessings. The world will need your resilience more than ever after this. It is very difficult for anyone who cares to see others in so much pain and suffering. It is best to acknowledge the survivor guilt for what it is, and talk it over honestly with others that are in the same boat as you.

Take stock of your patterns of behavior. Note which of your patterns have helped you mitigate the effect of the pandemic and which of your patterns have made the situation worse for you. This is a fierce one, but there will be more recessionary periods. The more you can learn about how to mitigate the next one, the better. This is not about being judgmental toward yourself. It is about how to become your own best friend. Be honest, and begin making the changes that you need to make.

Establish helpful routines. After the pandemic, when you look back – what would you like to say about yourself, how you handled the situation, what you learned about yourself, how you developed as a human being? Such dynamics don't happen in a vacuum. They come about because you do a little every day.

Helpful routines make things happen and carry us toward our goals.

Have faith. People are always asking me: “So you believe in this stuff? You believe in crystals?” My answer is “No!” Crystals and healing and energy are no more a matter of belief to me than the sun – that’s just how things are. I reserve “belief” for what is not yet manifest, what is still to come, for what requires a leap of faith. Earlier I talked of human nature and said “it is what it is.” But that’s not the end of the story. Our lives here on earth are all about the battle between our human nature vs. our human spirit. I believe that after we have sufficiently indulged our human nature, our spirits will rise up and prevail.

I do believe that *the human spirit* will win this battle. And not only that! I live in “America” now, currently the nation with the most COVID-19 cases. I believe that to conquer the virus we need to pull together and reclaim our name as the *United States* of America. Yes, I believe in the American spirit: – “one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” Yes, *together*, we will overcome.

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About the Author: Vivien Schapera is a writer, teacher and healer, living in Cincinnati, OH, USA. Among her many accomplishments, she is the founder of FourWinds Academy for the Healing Arts & Sciences, a school for training healers; and the author of a pioneering textbook *The Complete Guide to Crystal Surgery* (2020) as well as her inspiring memoir *Everyday Magic* (2002)

[Contact Vivien](#)



Continued: More Bio & Links

Bio: Vivien Schapera grew up in Apartheid South Africa. Her awareness of social dynamics, and their impact on daily life, began at the age of five, with the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960. She lived through history-in-the-making with the riots of the 1970's and 1980's and witnessed the release of Mandela, in 1990, when Prime Minister F.W. de Klerk extended the hand of reconciliation, in order to build a "New" South Africa. In 1991, Vivien and her family immigrated to the USA, following a vision in which she was called to Cincinnati, OH. Vivien believes the greatest untapped power on this planet is the power of human potential. As a psychologist, teacher, healer and writer, her personal mission is to help people develop their potential so they can make their best contribution to humanity, while using their time on earth to develop their souls and educate their spirits.

Vivien is trained in Psychology (M.A.), the Alexander Technique (M.AmSAT), Crystal Healing (Melody), Past-Life Regression (Brian Weiss) and holds a 4th Degree Black Belt in Taekwondo. She is the founder of two schools: Alexander Technique of Cincinnati for training Alexander Teachers and FourWinds Academy for the Healing Arts & Sciences a school for training healers. She is also the founder of Crystal Surgery, a completely new method of crystal healing, and works in private practice, integrating her diverse set of skills to deliver a unique service.

Books

[Everyday Magic](#) Read more about Vivien's inspirational story from the time she grows up in South Africa, through the vision that called her to the USA, to the establishment of FourWinds Academy.

[How to Lose Weight and Gain Money](#) Vivien, with co-author Drew Logan, uses her insights into behavior and how to change, to address the two dynamics that plague us while we're here on earth, yet offer us a most meaningful process for self-development.

[Guided Lessons for Students of the Alexander Technique](#) Vivien is an internationally renowned teacher of the Alexander Technique, a method for using our consciousness to generate desired mental and physical changes. She teams up with husband Neil and Nancy Dawley, to create this handbook.

[The Complete Guide to Crystal Surgery](#) This is Vivien's *magnum opus*, integrating 20 years of research, 7 courses and 5 years of writing to deliver a pioneering work in the field.

Websites

www.4windsacademy.org Vivien and her husband, Neil, teach Energy Healing, Crystal Healing, Intuition and Shamanism at FourWinds Academy. (currently dormant due to COVID-19)

www.CrystalHealingTechniques.com Vivien provides accessible resources with free courses, introductory online courses ranging from \$5 - \$28, blogs and vlogs, as well as a guided tour of her new book, *The Complete Guide to Crystal Surgery*.

Free Courses

[Crystal Healing Foundation Course](#)

[Crystal Surgery Basics](#)

Online Courses

[Course 1 Working on Others](#)

[Course 2 Working on Self](#)

[Course 3 Use What You've Got](#) (How to substitute for crystals you don't have)

[Course 4 Anti-Inflammatory Crystal Healing Technique](#)

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