Five ways you can make a positive difference during the coronavirus scare

Massachusetts has declared a state of emergency due to the spread of the coronavirus across the country and the commonwealth. There is no doubt that we are in troubled times — people are being laid off, businesses are either closing their doors or limiting their operations and different levels of panic is setting in for many. Here are five things you can do to make a positive impact during the coronavirus scare:

1. Check-in on your neighbors

I have a saying, we are defined by what we do for others. At this moment, there are vulnerable people on your street and neighborhood that could use your help. Do you know someone that is elderly, with health issues or simply could use a hand? Reach out to them. Shopping for an elderly or sick neighbor could literally save a life. If you do shop, use good sanitation principles — wash your hands and even washing the grocery items as the conveyor belt and debit/credit card reader can be home to germs.
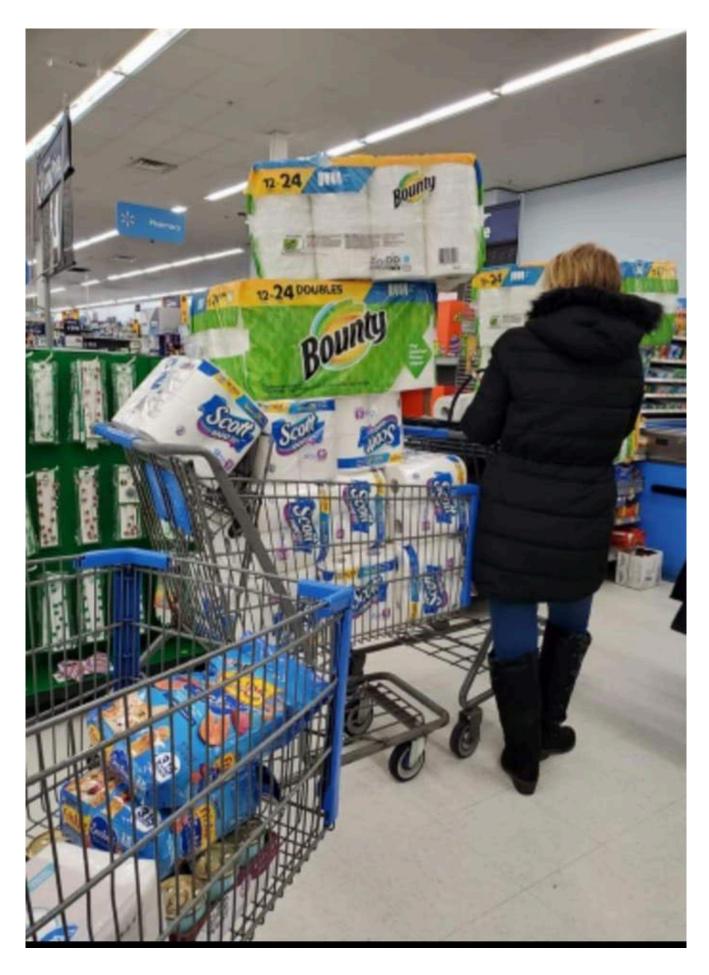
2. Buy gift cards

Businesses are struggling and many will not come back from this coronavirus scare. If you have disposable income, call or visit your favorite restaurant or small business's website and purchase a gift card. Like some of us who live paycheck-to-paycheck, some businesses are surviving month-to-month. While government relief may be on the way soon, the best way to ensure your favorite local restaurant/business survives is to support them today.

3. Don't hoard

I know this part will go on deaf ears, but for the love of God, stop the hoarding! The last few grocery trips I went on showed the results of panic. I saw empty shelves labeled for water, paper towels, toilet paper, spaghetti, pasta sauce, and other items.

The water is the dangerous part as some people live in towns with semi-toxic water. For example, Swansea and Norton are known to have terrible water in some areas — the tap literally produces brown water or known carcinogens. If you have clean water in your city/town and hoarding water, you are dangerously impacting other people's health. And what is up with hoarding toilet paper? Seriously??? If you are stocking your grocery cart with toilet paper and ignoring food, you won't survive too long in a real crisis.

4. Spend time with the kids

Schools in Massachusetts are closed for several weeks at a minimum. Take advantage of it and set some family time. One of my favorite TV shows is 'This is Us' — important takeaways from that show are life is precious, kids grow up quickly and today could be your or a loved one's last day. While being locked up at home with the kids can be a nightmare for some, consider at least an hour a day of family time.

5. Stop spreading hate and misinformation on social media

For the good or bad, social media has changed the way we communicate. The worst part of social media is the hate and misinformation that seems to thrive. During this coronavirus crisis, do the world a favor and only post accurate information by double-checking your information. Spreading misinformation can be dangerous. I've seen posts that Dunkin' was closing down during the crisis. Not true.

Finally, now is not the time to play the blame game — let's take a deep breath, come together like we did after 9/11, and then after the crisis is over figure out what we did wrong so we can be better prepared for the future.

What are you doing to be a positive influence during this coronavirus scare? Post a comment!