

Dear Usdan community:

Good day to all of you. Writing feels challenging since I do not know how every member of our community is managing, but hope as you read this, everyone you love is symptom free or recovering from the virus in as peaceful a way as possible. Further, knowing a number of you reading this likely experienced a lay off this week or the prospect of one, my heart goes out to you as you weather the challenge.

Last night, I remembered something that is undergirding my spirit and thinking about this summer. My husband Jonathan and I were married on October 11, 2001, precisely one month after September 11. I don't want to devote time to comparing that September 11 disaster to what we are experiencing now, but one thing that unites both is suddenly, our whole world felt turned upside down. In the midst of it, Jonathan, our families and I kept on planning the ceremony and the reception, considering multiple scenarios.

Months later, I realized that the need to plan our wedding helped us manage the shock and depression always creeping around us. As my colleagues and I are simultaneously planning for this summer, factoring in a number of scenarios, we too have something bright at a distant point to keep us lifted a little higher than we would otherwise.

A vision keeps flashing through my head. It's seeing our children descend from the bus, pass me by the green sign where I say hello each morning and wander, some with trepidation and some skipping, to their first class. Each time I think of this, I start to cry. Be forewarned, if and when this happens, I expect a puddle of tears to be streaming down my face.

I have been reading that one likely scenario for our society is the virus and cases will flare over the next months, calm in the summer heat, and return in the fall before we have a vaccine. Summer feels like our one ray of hope we all share as a society. As I watch my own children, nieces, nephews, and all their friends weather through this abnormality, I feel summer might be the deep boost of oxygen we can give them as adults.

On behalf of my colleagues, our board, the summer faculty and staff, and our most dedicated supporters, I want you to know how deeply committed we are to making this summer restorative, inspiring, free, creative, and full of smiles and laughter for your children and their friends. That vision is helping us get through each day, and if it provides you comfort, please join us in picturing it too.

Lauren

