

## Crippling Revelation

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### 1. “Crippling the World” by Joseph Grigely

My personal opinion about what's happening now--which is based on 53 years of intimate experience with the subject as a disabled person, is this: the world's been “crippled.” In disability theory we use this phrase to describe inversals of abledness... **All it takes is a blink, and in a moment, nothing is as it was.**

If you read carefully between the lines of public discourse, you will find many people with disabilities are saying: now the world will feel what we feel. Now the world will experience life as we experience it. This involves an inability to move freely or access information with ease, isolation, frustration with institutional procedures and practices, and a very special kind of anger that one's plans have been disrupted. You feel robbed of fairness and justice.

So the frustration and anger that some are feeling, and which is coming out into the open in different ways, is not unexpected. We can't change what is happening around us, as far as the pandemic itself is concerned. We can only change how we relate to it, and how we assimilate the circumstances, and realign ourselves in relation to those circumstances...

The first step in managing things is to be kind to yourself. It's OK to put aside all your big goals and plans if you feel you need to. You can come back to them later. Or maybe they'll change-- this all takes time. In the world of disability, the notion of 'overcoming' is a problematic construction; it assumes that one must overcome circumstances to move on. **But it's not overcoming that matters: it's “intercoming”, of working with the situation, reshaping and realigning yourself as you go.**

2. As the chronically ill know, to be alive *is* to be “in uncertainty.” I had felt invisible in my illness, I realized, because American culture—and American medicine within it—largely strives to downplay this fact. A doctor I know told me that in med school he was explicitly taught never to say “I don’t know” to a patient; uncertainty was thought to open the door to lawsuits. In the place of uncertainty, Americans have catchphrases: *Just do it. What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. Muscle through it.* ... Since the novel coronavirus began spreading in the United States in earnest, we have collectively been living in a shadowland: whether or not we have been infected with the virus, we’ve all been infected with the uncertainty it brings.

-Megan O’Rourke, “*Americans Have to Accept Uncertainty*”, The Atlantic, May 6, 2020

## Talmud Bavli Shabbat 88a

ויתיצבו בתחתית ההר אמר רב אבדימי בר חמא בר חסא מלמד שכפה הקדוש ברוך הוא עליהם את ההר כגיגית ואמר להם אם אתם מקבלים התורה מוטב ואם לאו שם תהא קבורתכם

*And they took their places at the foot [or, on the underside] of the mountain (Exodus 19:17). Rav Avdimi the son of Hama the son of Hasa said, "This teaches that the Holy One, blessed is He, lowered the [detached] mountain over them like a vat and said to them, 'If you accept the Torah, fine; but if not, there will be your grave.'"*

## Midrash Tanhuma, on Tamud Shabbat 88a

And if you should contest, saying, it was concerning the Written Torah that the Almighty suspended the mountain above them like an inverted cask, [think again,] for at the moment that He asked them if they are willing to receive the Torah, all of them answered, saying, 'We will uphold it and we will hear it!' for it involves no toil or hardship, and it is not so extensive.

Rather, it was regarding the Oral Torah [that He threatened them], for it involves many fine details of both major and minor commandments and it is as powerful as death...for only he who loves the Almighty with all of his heart and all of his soul and all of his might is willing to study it, as it is written, 'Love God your Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might' (Deuteronomy 6:5).