
INTRODUCTION

“Ultimately, the greatest lesson that COVID-19 can teach humanity is that we are all in this together.”

-Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw

2020 will leave its mark. We have experienced a form of psychological trauma that has left us feeling disempowered and disconnected, not unlike that of a survivor of a crime or natural disaster.

The global pandemic, which started in late 2019, has, to date, sickened millions and killed over 300,000 in the US alone. Whether you personally experienced infection or not, it has affected all of us in one way or another. In addition to the toll on human life and health, the pandemic has cost jobs, financial security, freedom and peace of mind.

At the time of this workbook release, the prospect of a vaccine has given us hope for better times ahead. However, the trauma we have suffered in 2020 needs resolution. Mentally processing what was experienced and making peace with the year is the best path forward.

One way to start this healing process is to remember what happened and explore its meaning in our lives. This workbook can help facilitate this process. In addition to documenting, remembering and processing, the simple act of **writing things down can be a balm for your emotional wounds**. As a result, you can move ahead with a clear head for 2021 and beyond.

WHY DWELL ON THE PAST?

Experts generally recognize three stages of recovery from psychological trauma (Herman, 1998) that work to both empower the trauma victim and renew connections to life after the event. They include establishing a sense of safety, retelling the story of the event and reengaging with the world. Our approach to 2020 recovery will follow a similar path.

REESTABLISH HEALTH AND SAFETY

We are rounding the corner: Safety is returning slowly. The promise of new vaccines and treatments for COVID-19 will help to address our primary need for safety. As the vaccine rolls out to the population and case numbers fall, we will retain a sense of control over our lives and our environment. We can further contribute to our own sense of safety by continuing to wear a mask and keep a safe social distance from people outside of our households.

RETELL YOUR STORY

Telling your story can help you heal. An ordeal like 2020, with so many disastrous things occurring at once, can become fragmented and overwhelming in memory. Retelling your perspective of this year, in your own words, will help to organize the events into something that can be explored, understood and integrated into your personal story. This workbook is designed to be a hands-on tool to document your experience of 2020, to process what happened in the world, in your community and in your life. Each section provides prompts and reminders of 2020 events with space to write your thoughts, experiences and details of your personal story.

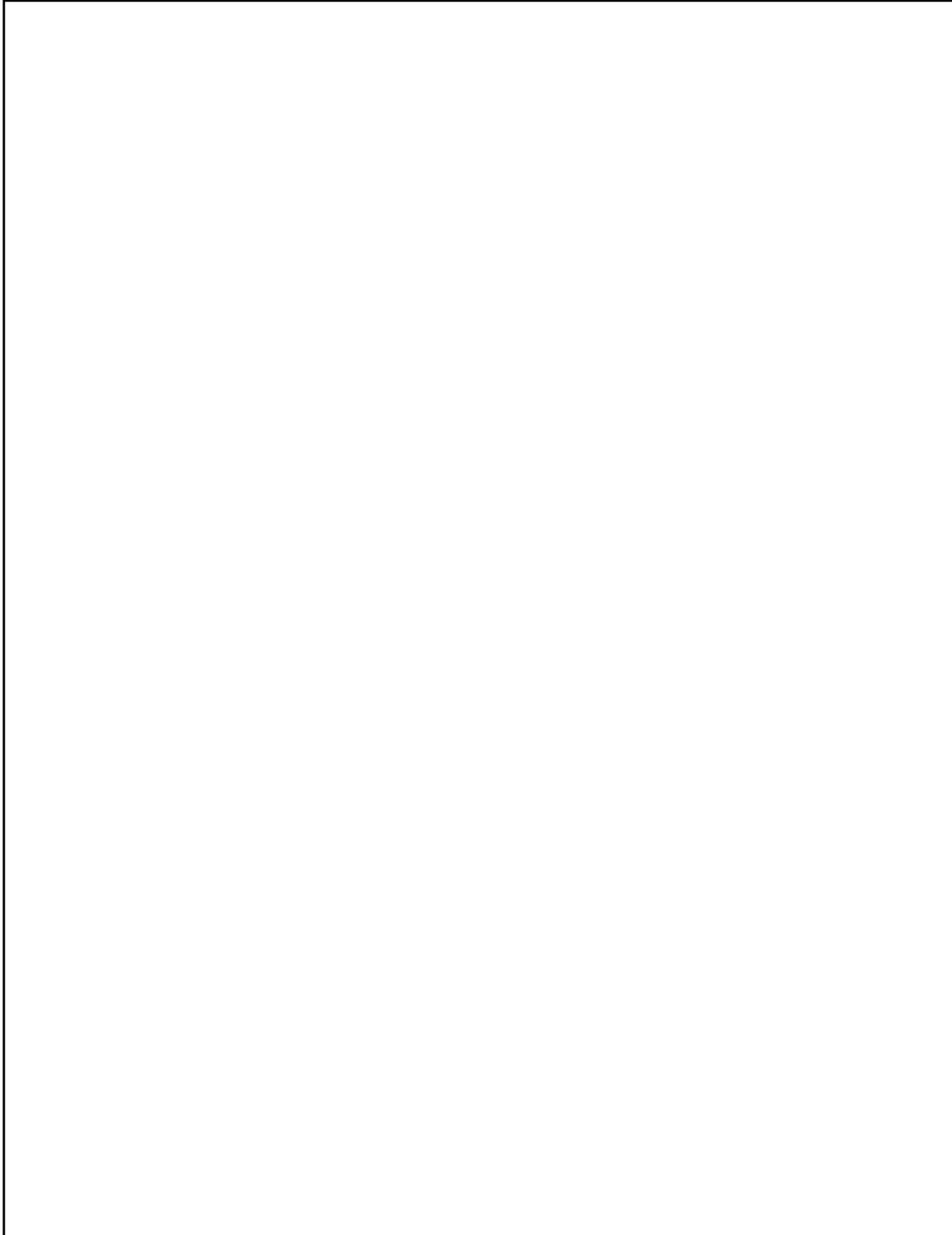
RECONNECT THE BROKEN PIECES AND REENGAGE WITH LIFE

As things “get back to normal” (whatever that means), we can start to pick up the pieces and recover what was lost. 2021 presents an opportunity that other new years have not: The chance to start over. For some, this disaster helped to break unhealthy ties and habits and offers a clean slate to start anew. For others, there will be real work to do to rebuild and regain lost progress. To help with that, the last section of this guidebook presents some tools to set goals and make a plan.

PART 1

YOUR STORY STARTS HERE

Picture yourself on New Year's Day 2020. How did you celebrate the new year? What were your plans, resolutions and ideas for the fresh, new year? What were you excited about?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their story about New Year's Day 2020.

2020 REVIEW

2020 VOICES

“The bright side of 2020 being the worst year ever is that it will drastically reduce the amount of ‘hindsight is 2020’ jokes next year.”

- @madlymomming

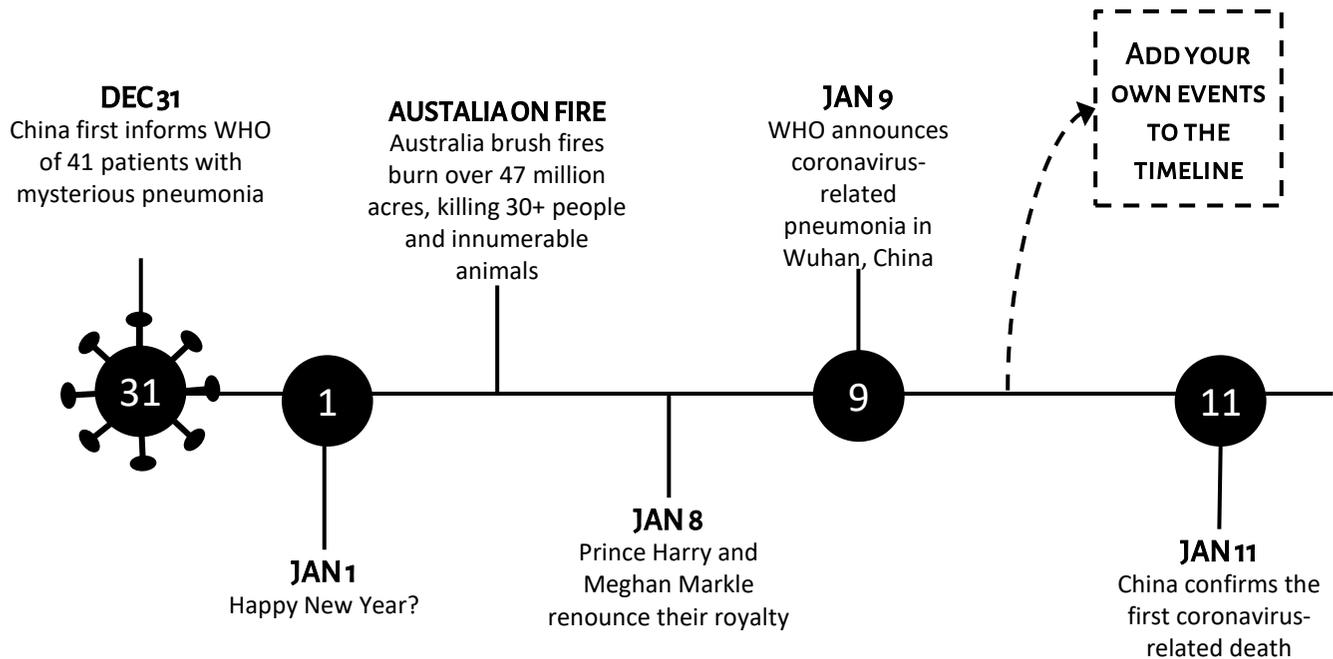
Philosopher George Santayana said, “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it”. Hopefully there will never be a repeat of 2020. However, as dreadful as it was, it is valuable to look back at the year and remember your place in it.

In addition to creating a record you can reflect upon years from now, it can be therapeutic to remember past events, both happy and sad, and incorporate them into your personal history.

We’ll start with a month-by-month guided review of what happened in the world during 2020*. Add your personal events and significant dates to the timeline and write your thoughts in the prompt boxes. Feel free to use these pages in any way that helps you remember and process these events.

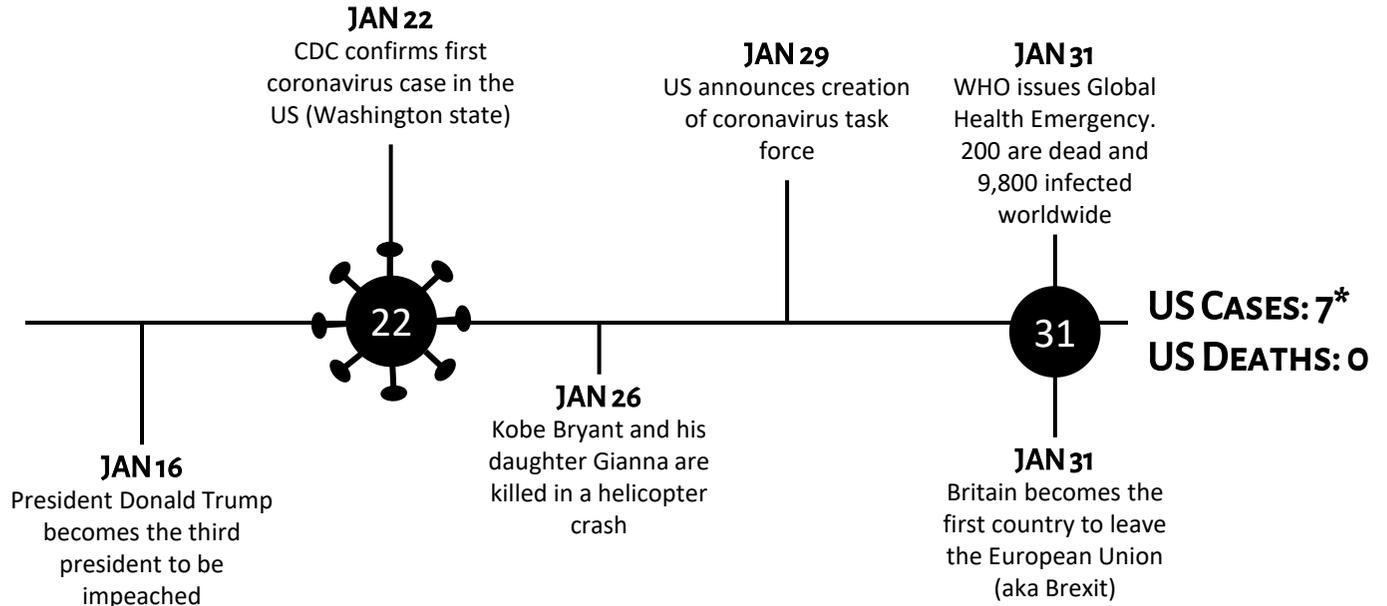
**Sources for each timeline event, quote and news item are provided in References*

JANUARY



2020 started like a normal year. What was going on in your life in January?

2020



**COVID-19 case and death totals reported by CDC as of 12/29/2020. Totals may change due to retroactive adjustments*

When did you first become aware of the coronavirus outbreak in China? What do you remember about it? What other events in January were significant for you?

QUARANTINE

2020 VOICES

“After years of swearing that I couldn’t clean my house because I didn’t have enough time, 2020 has proven that may have not been the reason.”

-The Super Mom Life

For some, the pause on “normal life” freed up time to pursue interests and hobbies, or mark items off their to-do lists. What did you do with your time during quarantine?

DISTRACTIONS

As we suddenly shifted our attention to home, new ways to distract and entertain ourselves went viral. Which of these did you do?



What other forms of entertainment and/or distractions helped to get you and your loved ones through this year?

2020 VOICES

“My husband and I switched sides of the bed this weekend and that’s what we call ‘vacation’ now.”

-@ilazer

FINAL THOUGHTS

2020 delivered one surprise after another. For me, one of those surprises was this book. I've always found that reading, researching and writing down my thoughts is a good way to deal with life's challenges. This book began simply as a personal exercise to process my own experiences in 2020. My intent was to record interesting and important details I would certainly forget, as well as examine and understand my own messy pile of feelings of worry, grief, anger, confusion, boredom and loneliness. As I began creating the timeline, researching the events and asking myself the questions, I realized others may benefit from writing down their experiences as well. This was written in the last few weeks of 2020, with a timeline that looked more dire with each passing day. My hope for us all is that our 2021 timelines are filled with good news, peace, health and happiness.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rachel Radwinsky, PhD is an industrial/organizational psychologist, author and professional coach who helps people improve a core driver of their lives – their choices. She commandeers the most valuable improvement tools and techniques from the disciplines of psychology, business, quality and technology and makes them accessible to all.

She is founder of MCT Associates, LLC, a practice focused on helping people and organizations master their choices by envisioning their ideal futures and creating and executing the plans for achieving them. Her coaching system is based on the Ten Thousand Choices program.

Dr. Radwinsky lives in Frederick, Maryland with her delightful family and adorable dog who is the Best. Boy. Ever.

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