

Mindful Monday, October 12, 2020

"Where there's you, there's a way."

- Unknown

A few weeks ago, Nancy Doyle wrote a great article in Forbes: *Professor Ahmad's Six-Month Wall: Rehumanizing the Virtual Workplace*. I found it to be calming and reassuring. The writing is easy to read and both grants us permission to be and acknowledges that we are human. The big takeaway? The 6-month wall is normal. It happens to most humans in long-haul crises. Thank goodness. Something about our recent experiences is normal. Yes, that is right. Something about our recent experiences is normal. The article frames crisis fatigue (the topic from last week) in a way that both humanizes and unifies our collective experience. [Please view the entire article](#) for additional information, unique perspective, and suggestions from others on navigating our way over, around and through "the wall."

Professor Aisha Ahmad is a professor of political science at the University of Toronto. Her work takes her all over the world and she has lived and worked through several long-haul crises. She offers reassuring and grounding advice noting,

*"The six-month mark in any sustained crisis is always difficult. We have all adjusted to this "new normal," but might now feel like we're running out of steam. Yet, at best, we are only one third of the way through this marathon. How can we keep going? First, in my experience, this is a very normal time to struggle or slump. I *always* hit a wall six months into a tough assignment in a disaster zone. The desire to "get away" or "make it stop" is intense. I've done this many times, and at 6 months, it's like clockwork".*

The takeaways here? We are all in this together, we all may be having difficulties, and we all want it to stop. The wall we feel like we are hitting is normal in long-haul crisis, apparently showing up and exiting in a predictable pattern. Perhaps not super happy news but reassuring in the sense that this is a shared bond, a common experience across humanity. And Aisha tells us, there is hope on the other side.

"This time, our crisis is global and there is nowhere to run. That's OK. I've had to power through that six-month hump before and there is life on the other side. Right now, it feels like we are looking ahead at a long, dark wintery tunnel. But it's not going to be like that. Rather, this is our next major adaptation phase. We've already re-learned how to do groceries, host meetings, and even teach classes. And we have found new ways to be happy and have fun. But as the days get shorter and colder, we need to be ready to innovate again. This is my first pandemic, but not my first six-month wall. So, what can I share to help you? First, the wall is real and normal. And frankly, it's not productive to try to ram your head through it. It will break naturally in about four to six weeks if you ride it out. Of course, there are things we have to do. Work. Teach. Cook. Exercise. But just don't expect to be sparkingly happy or wildly creative in the middle of your wall. Right now, if you can meet your obligations and be kind to your loved ones, you get an A+."

"Where this is you, there is a way."

"We have already found new ways to live, love, and be happy under these rough conditions. A miracle & a marvel. This is hard proof that we have what it takes to keep going. So, dear friends, do not despair of the six-month wall. It's not permanent, nor will it define you in this period of adversity. Trust that the magic that helped you through the first phase is still there.

Take a breath & a pause.

You'll be on the other side in no time."