



PANDEMIC PICK-ME-UPPERS

**Celebrating Uplifting
Silver Linings**

Michael Kerr

It's all too easy to dwell on the economic hardships, stress, and loss of life that so many people experienced during the pandemic. So, yes, I could have easily compiled a list called, "1,001 Reasons the Pandemic SUCKED!"

Instead, I wrote this.

I compiled this list to help us intentionally shift our focus away from the negative and onto some of the positive, inspiring, and quirky stories that came out of the pandemic. I wrote this as a celebration of how, more often than not, humanity rose to the challenge to spread an epidemic of kindness and compassion.

I don't want to minimize the very real challenges and tragedies that many people faced. Celebrating silver linings doesn't mean that we ignore or forget about the cloud. The intent is to simply remind us of the best of our humanity, to remind us that even during the worst of times, we humans are pretty darn good at rising to the challenge and still keeping our sense of humor afloat.

So, this is my humble attempt to catalog just a sliver of the kindness, creativity, inspiration, and humor that made a difference, along with some of the quirkiest side effects of the pandemic, such as the explosion in the sales of popcorn (but alas, as you'll discover, not accordions).

Some items are broad in scope; others are ridiculously minute (please see #44: Panda love). While you may not agree with all my choices, my hope is that this list will bring a smile to your face, remind you of some of the stories you may have forgotten, and serve as a catalyst that will help you focus on your *own* upsides during your next downside.

If there is something obvious or obscure you think I've missed, then let me know – let's keep this list going and growing! Please share your suggestions with me at mike@mikekerr.com

Michael Kerr

www.MikeKerr.com

1. Pant-less meetings. Prior to the pandemic you likely wore pants to most meetings, but, admit it, you probably attended at least one video meeting without proper pants on. Ah yes, the freedom, the comfort ... the embarrassment when you forgot you were pant-less and stood up for that virtual teambuilding exercise.

2. Pedestrian-friendly main streets. Scores of cities and towns created open, pedestrian-friendly main streets, while restaurants and cafes expanded their patios outward. Europeans might be thinking, “Big whoop you western heathens, we’ve been doing this for centuries!” But in most western cities, this was a new concept that created safer, environmentally friendlier community experiences.

3. Virtual family reunions. With the ability of family members worldwide to gather around the online water cooler, family reunions surged. Depending on your family that could have been a godsend or a miserable two hours spent in front of a webcam hearing stories from your drunken brother-in-law, Bob. But let’s remember, brother-in-law Bob from Australia could have been a houseguest for two weeks, so let’s still put this one down in the win column!

4. Ted Lasso. Enough said, unless you haven’t watched the award-winning, feel-good sitcom that captured everyone’s hearts during the pandemic. In that case you really ought to.

5. Schitt’s Creek. Enough said, unless you haven’t watched the binge-worthy, Canadian sitcom that swept the 2020 Emmy comedy awards and captured everyone’s hearts during the pandemic. In that case you really ought to.

6. Comfortable footwear. Will women return to wearing high heels as frequently as they once did? Will men still squeeze their feet into sole-crushing (see what I did there?) dress shoes? Fun fact: Sales of the once derided foam sandals known as Crocs surged 64% in the first quarter of 2021!

7. Streaming llamas. Yup, where else but during a global pandemic could you book a donkey, camel, alligator, or llama to sit in on your Zoom meeting? Several farms and wildlife parks from around the globe offered up their critters as a fun way to liven up Zoom meetings (or family reunions). It also provided an innovative way for those businesses to pivot to a new revenue stream.

8. We learned how to really wash our hands! Most of us likely thought we had learned the art of handwashing by kindergarten, but little did we know that a) so many miscreants weren't washing their hands, and b) most of us were doing it wrong!

According to the Centre for Disease Control, this is the proper way to wash our hands:

- 1.** Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- 2.** Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails.
- 3.** Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end *twice*.
- 4.** Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- 5.** Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.
- 6.** Don't lick your hands. (Okay, I added this one. I just thought it needed saying.)

9. Firefighter birthday drive-bys. I asked my wife for one of these for my birthday, but evidently firefighters were only doing these for kids. So, *fine*. But what a cool idea! Since so many children couldn't have a normal birthday celebration, many fire departments offered special birthday drive-bys. The City of Calgary's fire department, for example, offered birthday drive-by celebrations with their sirens aglow to children aged 5-12 or kids over the age of 75 years young. (But again, evidently not to middle-aged men. Not that I'm bitter or anything.)

10. Walks in the hood. Put up your hand if you rediscovered the simple pleasure of taking a stroll in your own neighborhood? And how many of you discovered you actually have a neighborhood?

11. Appreciating small pleasures. When things we once took for granted were removed from our lives it served as a powerful reminder to be more grateful for small, simple pleasures. And this act of gratitude is no small thing. Heaps of happiness research reveals that practicing intentional gratitude is one of the most powerful ways to boost your overall level of happiness.

12. Focusing on what truly matters. The flipside of appreciating the small is being more aware of what truly matters in our lives. There's nothing like a global pandemic, after all, to remind us that nothing is more important than our mental and physical health, our families, and supportive relationships. Oh, and having one's Netflix account paid up.

13. Lipstick-less lips. Lipstick doesn't necessarily go well with a mask, so many women saved money and time going lipstick-less.

14. COVID beards. Love 'em or hate 'em, “COVID beards” became a thing, saving many manly men money and time.

15. Causal Fridays became casual Tuesdays. And Mondays. And, well, unless you had an important video meeting, causal Fridays became casual every day as business folks took to the streets and burned their ties and pantyhose. Okay, maybe they didn't get that dramatic about it, but there's no doubt that causal clothes became the new “work-from-home-chic.” Fun fact: Sales of sweatpants in some markets increased by 80% in the first year of the pandemic.

16. A newfound appreciation for what teachers *really* do. If you are a teacher, thank you. If you had to home school your children for the first time, there are excellent counselling services available in your community. I jest, but face it – if you home-schooled your children, you undoubtedly gained a whole new level of appreciation for what teachers do day in and day out.

17. Good-bye traffic jams! Don't honk if you didn't miss traffic jams! In some places, including New York City and Los Angeles, traffic dropped by 50% at the height of the pandemic, while global traffic noise dropped by 70%.

18. 30-second commutes! Many folks said adios to daily, hair-raising, soul-sucking, time-draining commutes, and hello to 30-second walking commutes!

19. Cleaner air. Speaking of fewer traffic jams and shorter commutes, the air was much cleaner. How much cleaner? A NASA study (just one of many) found that 50 of the 61 analyzed cities showed nitrogen dioxide reductions between 20-50% in the 9 months following the start of the pandemic. After only 12 days, locals in the Punjab region of India were able to see the Himalayas for the first time in several decades due to reduced levels of pollution, while Delhi experienced a 44% reduction in air pollution levels *just in the first day or so* of their lockdown.

20. Appreciating unsung heroes. Remember in the first few months of the pandemic how we all discovered a newfound appreciation for people who are often overlooked – frontline workers such as cashiers, baggers, cleaners, truck drivers, and so on? Let's keep that appreciation alive, shall we?

21. Pot-banging celebrations. The practice of locals flocking to their balconies and clapping and banging pots in support of health-care workers began in New York City, Italy, and Spain, but quickly spread to many places around the globe. Let's keep finding simple, fun, and creative ways to show our love and appreciation to health-care workers.

22. Concerted efforts to hold concerts. Hundreds of viral videos popped up showing people holding concerts – often impromptu - from their balconies or patios. An orchestra in Rotterdam even managed to perform Beethoven's Ode to Joy online with each musician playing individually from their own home to cues on their earphones!

23. Pet adoptions skyrocketed. Many shelters struggled to keep up with the demands for furry family additions, with some shelters reporting zero vacancy rates for the first time ever!

24. Pet meetings skyrocketed. Okay, I'm not talking about dogs hooking up with their pals over Zoom, rather simply meeting colleagues' pets who video-bombed and often stole the show during oh-so-many virtual meetings.

25. Books boomed. In some markets, more books were sold during the pandemic than in the previous eight years, and numerous surveys found that the amount of time people spent hunkered down with a book increased dramatically too.

26. Virtual national park tours. If you were pining to get out and see some pines in your favorite national park, all was not lost. Through the magic of virtual tours, you could grab some popcorn and have a front-row view of some of your much-loved outdoor attractions.

27. Virtual museum tours. If you were pining for some indoor escapism on the other hand, virtual museum tours allowed people access to museums that they otherwise may have never been able to experience or, in some cases, afford.

28. Everyone had front-row seats. Speaking of virtual experiences, whether you were listening to a keynote speaker at a virtual conference or taking in a virtual concert, when it's online, *everyone* has a front-row seat and for a fraction of the cost of an in-person front-row seat. Fun fact: Tickets for the best seats to the last Rolling Stones' concerts went for \$800 and up a pop; the best seats in the house at the 2016 World Series reportedly sold for up to \$1.54 million!

29. Homemade bread baking. Sales of bread makers increased by 140%. I know some of you got sick of everyone bread-bragging on social media, but come on, what's not to love about homemade bread?

30. Workplace culture mattered more than ever. Leaders and organizations quickly learned they had to be extra intentional when it came to focusing on their culture, particularly when it came to living their values out loud. Companies with stronger cultures were more resilient and adapted quicker to the rapidly changing work world.

31. Flexible work schedules. Not everyone had the luxury or ability to shift their schedule, but a lot of employees had the freedom to create their own schedules, as workplaces adapted to the new working reality.

32. Measuring results instead of attendance. While not possible for everyone, a lot of leaders and organizations embraced the forward-thinking notion of measuring results over attendance!

33. A newfound appreciation of trust. When everyone is working from home, often on their own schedules and timelines, leaders and teammates alike quickly learned the importance of earning and demonstrating trust as a core value.

34. A roaring revival of the 3Rs. People reduced, reused, and recycled like never before.

35. Rhinos rebounded. No rhinoceroses were killed for their horns since 1999!

36. Nicer smelling homes. Sales of scented candles soared by 130% as people cozied up their home abodes.

37. Embracing a spirit of hygge-ness. Okay, I'm not sure that's a word, but the term "hygge" is a Danish term referring to finding comfort, pleasure, and warmth in simple, soothing things such as a cozy atmosphere or the feeling of friendship.

38. People popped prolific pots of popcorn. Popcorn sales rose by 30% as people stocked up for their next binge-worthy series.

39. The return of drive-in movie theaters. Another blast from the past took center stage as informal drive-in movie theaters popped up, allowing people to safely gather for movie experiences the old-fashioned way.

40. Fewer colds. And fewer garden-variety flus. With everyone social distancing, washing their hands, wearing masks, and hunkering down at home, it only makes sense that there was a staggering decline in the number of colds and flus people caught.

41. Cleaner water. Although stories of dolphins appearing in Venice proved to be false, there were many areas that reported much cleaner water. The dissolved oxygen content in the Ganga River in India, for example, increased by a whopping 80%, while other rivers in India, such as the Yamuna, saw a fivefold improvement in quality. And the canals of Venice *did* become much clearer within just one month of the lockdown, while officials in Acapulco, Mexico, Salinas, Ecuador, Barcelona, Spain, and elsewhere all reported much cleaner beaches.

42. Cycling exploded. The sale of bicycles went through the roof, especially electric bikes. In some markets there was a two-year wait for bicycle purchases.

43. Meditation and mindfulness mattered. There was an explosion of mindfulness and meditation apps during the pandemic.

44. Panda love! After Hong Kong's Ocean Park Zoo had to close its doors to the public, two pandas were finally able to mate after ten years of unsuccessful attempts. Ten years! Perhaps, experts mused, they were just waiting for some alone time! On a similar note, other zoos, such as Cuba's National Zoo, reported a huge spike in rarely seen births, including leopards, Bengals tigers, giraffes, antelopes, and oxen. And more births weren't just happening in zoos: Endangered jackass penguins in South Africa saw a record-breaking breeding season. And owing to the absence of people of beaches blocking their paths during the daytime, baby jackass penguins received 2 to 3 more feedings per day from their parents. The amount of loggerhead sea turtles nesting ashore in Florida rose by 61% while mountain gorillas in Uganda welcomed twice as many births.

45. A resurgence of nostalgic comedies. Numerous outlets reported a huge uptake in viewership of nostalgic comedies, suggesting people wanted to not only laugh, but perhaps also tap into that fuzzy-wuzzy feeling that sometimes only nostalgia can offer up. In the U.S. shows such as *Friends*, *I Love Lucy*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, and *Family Matters* saw viewership rise anywhere from 8% to a whopping 392% increase in eyeballs.

46. Boredom-relieving board games. The Guardian Newspaper reported that during the first month of the lockdown, March 2020, sales of board games increased by 240%. That trend carried on throughout the pandemic, with games such as Monopoly Classic and Scrabble experiencing a huge resurgence.

47. Lots of puzzles were solved. According to one historian, there was a surge in sales of jigsaw puzzles the likes of which hasn't been seen in the U.S. since the Great Depression. Sales of puzzles in one company rose by 345%, and some manufacturers had to scramble to keep up with the demand.

48. Gardening blossomed. Whether for relaxation, out of boredom, or simply because people had the gift of time, there's no question that more people than ever took up gardening. Missouri-based Baker Creek Seeds had to shut down its website three times due to overwhelming demand as they sold six times more seeds compared to their average busy season. Garden supplies ran out in many places, while online gardening courses surged in popularity.

49. Backyard birding boomed. Birdfeeders and birdfeed were more sought-after commodities during the pandemic, as gazillions (okay, I may be slightly exaggerating) of home-bound folks binge-watched backyard birds. The website eBird, which allows birders to note which bird species they've spotted, saw an explosion of activity as people flocked to their site. During February 2021, 140,000 users logged on – the greatest number of users in a single month and a 50% increase over the previous February!

50. Backyard walking boomed. Well, at least with one 100-year-old, WWII veteran who managed to become a Guinness World Records holder by raising £27,699,581 (\$37,623,300 US dollars) for JustGiving by walking back and forth in his backyard during the first U.K. lockdown. Captain Tom Moore became a beacon of positivity and hopefulness and was knighted for his charitable walking efforts.

51. Backyard squirrel picnic benches became a thing. After losing his job, Rick Kalinowski dedicated his time to building ridiculously cute mini-picnic benches for the squirrels in his yard. People enjoyed the online photos of them so much that he parlayed his idea into a successful business. Kalinowski created an Etsy store, SquirrellyTreasureCo, which received an astounding 400 orders in the first 24 hours!

52. Costumed carriers. Mailman Jon Matson, from Boldon, England, took to dressing up in different costumes to entertain and cheer up his customers during the pandemic. Notable costumes included a cheerleader, Waldo of “Where’s Waldo” fame, and, yes, even Cleopatra. People along his route honked and waved in support, while neighbors routinely texted other neighbors to alert them of his imminent arrival.

53. Teddy bear picnics. Ted and Ed are two adorable teddy bears that reside in Stockport, England. Every day, their neighbors were treated to various scenes of their lives, from mowing the lawn to camping to just chillaxing at a day spa. The Moor Bears, as they became known, even had their own Instagram and Facebook pages allowing the entire world to keep up with their shenanigans.

54. Fitness went viral. Thousands of fitness classes moved online, and some with astounding success. Joe Wicks from England, a popular fitness coach, ran daily workouts on his YouTube channel while schools were closed and, on the 24th of March, saw a record-breaking 955,185 households tune in!

55. Community workouts worked out. While some got their fitness fix online, many people took to cul-de-sacs, city parks, and even balconies to participate in group fitness activities.

56. Cooking lessons heated up. Numerous celebrity chefs and restaurants began offering free cooking classes to provide homebound diners some foodie inspiration.

57. Virtual pub quizzes thrived. People missing their pub quizzes soon found numerous options online to get their trivia fix. One virtual pub quiz, held in the U.K. on April 30, 2020, broke a record when 182,513 households logged in to play along.

58. Weird records were broken. How weird? Well, for one, Jed Hockin from Australia locked down the very first world record for the most consecutive soccer touches with a toilet roll – 84 touches within 30 seconds! (And who says people weren't productive during lockdowns?)

59. There was some good news. Actor John Krasinski (who played the adorkable Jim Halpert on the sitcom *The Office*) created an immensely popular video diary called *Some Good News* on YouTube. He shared, yup, the good news he had read or seen with fans, including delivering some of his own good news. Highlights included John catching up with his former co-star, Steve Carrell, surprising a young fan who was unable to see the Broadway show *Hamilton* with a performance by Lin Manuel Miranda and the show's original cast, and reuniting *The Office* cast for an update of the "Forever" dance performed at Jim and Pam's wedding on the show. The cast also reunited in May 2020 to marry and celebrate the marriage of two *Office* superfans!

60. Romeo romance returned. Paola Agnelli and Michele D'Alpaos from Verona, Italy, the city of Romeo and Juliet, fell in love from afar and, as in Shakespeare's play, their love story involved a balcony. Agnelli stood directly across from him on her sixth-floor balcony while her sister performed a violin rendition of *We Are the Champions*, as part of a nightly musical performance, intended to uplift the quarantined neighborhood. They locked eyes from afar, connected remotely, and six months later were engaged. (So, a much happier ending than, you know, the other version of Romeo and Juliet.)

61. Things got wild! Wild animals returned to unexpected places, some wandering down deserted city streets, while others returned to places they hadn't been seen in years. One colorful example: Flamingoes flocked by the thousands to a lake in Mumbai, lighting up the lake with a brilliant show of pink. And Sika deer in a Japanese city who had grown accustomed to being handfed by humans, reverted to their old, much healthier eating grounds.

62. Quieter oceans. According to a study reported in *Global Change Biology*, the ability of dolphins to clearly hear each other tripled in some locales during lockdown as waterways became devoid of non-essential vessels. Off the Alaska coast, ocean waters became 25 times quieter, which enabled mother humpback whales to travel farther away from their calves to feed properly because they could now hear their calves from much farther away.

63. So many signs of support. Father of three, Albert Conner, waited outside the hospital with a sign of support showing just how much he loved his wife as she was quarantined in a hospital undergoing chemotherapy treatments. Similarly, Bob Shellard couldn't visit his wife in her Connecticut, U.S., nursing home to celebrate their anniversary. Never once missing their anniversary, he stood outside her window with a sign that read: "I've loved you 67 years and still do. Happy Anniversary."

64. The show must go on. Dr. Cornelia Vertenstein, a 92-year-old Holocaust survivor, had taught piano lessons out of her Denver home for more than half a century. When students had to stay home, she made sure their lessons would continue. Vertenstein called her students on their cell phones or used FaceTime on her iPad, while the students propped up their phones so she could still see their hands.

65. The Easter Bunny dubbed an essential worker. New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern confirmed during a press conference that both the Tooth Fairy and Easter Bunny were essential workers. Ardern also, however, cautioned that the Easter Bunny might have trouble making it to all the homes, so she encouraged children to draw pictures of Easter Eggs to put in their windows and create their own Easter egg hunts in their neighborhoods.

66. Heavy hitters helped homeschoolers. To assist parents with homeschooling duties, the BBC enlisted some famous experts to deliver online courses to young people, including Sir David Attenborough, Professor Brian Cox teaching science, and footballer Sergio Ageuro teaching young children how to count in Spanish.

67. Friendly faces cropped up. Many doctors who had to don protective personal equipment took to wearing photos of themselves smiling to help ease their patients' stress. Patients saw a reassuring, friendly face and made a better personal connection with their doctor.

68. Anonymous acts of kindness blossomed. Here's just one story among countless thousands. An anonymous mystery man purchased ten large bouquets and had them delivered anonymously to people in the town of Needham, Massachusetts. The owner of Needham Florist, Julie Ben-David, was just about to close her store due to a state-mandated lockdown and was blown away by the incredible act of kindness.

69. We consumed copious amounts of alcohol ... through our hands! Cosmetic companies, as well as numerous beer and spirit-producing companies, shifted (notice how I deftly avoided the word “pivot”?) towards using their alcohol to produce hand sanitizers instead. Brewers Brewdog, gin distillers Leith gin, and Dundee-based Verdant spirits were some of the first to announce this shift in March 2020.

70. Quarantined dances and sing-alongs were not unusual. Starting in Italy, impromptu mass sing-alongs (often featuring patriotic songs) and dances took place via balconies. The trend quickly spread around the world. Every day at 11:00 a.m., neighbors living in a town in the northwest of England took to their front gardens for a daily gathering of social-distancing dancing. In one viral video, residents can be seen dancing up a storm to the tune of Tom Jones’s *It’s Not Unusual*. This is yet one more phenomenon that I for one would love to see become, well, not unusual.

71. Balcony BINGO! Residents in a building in Seville, Spain, played Bingo together from their balconies using a loudspeaker to announce the selections.

72. Checking in became fashionable. One 93-year-old grandfather stuck in isolation received a note from his 5-year-old neighbor Kirah that read, “I just wanted to check to see if you’re Okay? I have drawn you a rainbow to remind you that you are not alone.” The neighbor wrote back, thanking Kirah for the note and offering the girl a small history lesson in return. “I was the first person to move into the crescent in 1955 and I have been here ever since,” he wrote, adding, “I thought your drawing of the rainbow was amazing and I am going to place it in my window for people to see.”

73. Bridging the generation gap was music to the ears. James Gallagher, 9, and his 73-year-old grandfather, Paul Browne, didn't let a pandemic stop them from hanging out. They held an impromptu jam session via video, where Browne sang Queen's *I Want to Break Free* while his grandson played the guitar.

74. Play-by-play dog commentary went viral. You may have forgotten this viral phenomenon featuring videos by British sports broadcaster Andrew Cotter. Claiming he was bored without any live sporting events to cover, Cotter posted videos of him doing play-by-play commentaries of his two beautiful labs, Mabel and Olive. Click here to watch [one of the play-by-play videos.](#)

75. Doggie deliveries. When Colorado Springs resident, Renee Hellman, became quarantined to her home owing to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, her neighbor, a seven-year-old golden retriever named Sunny, came to her aid. Yes, Sunny's owner, Karen Evelth, trained Sunny to pick up Renee's grocery list each day, then later delivered the items that Karen would pick up from the supermarket.

76. Pluto was highly visible. And no, I don't mean the ex-planet. Pluto, the adorable "talking" Schnauzer (Pluto talked with a little help from an app), kept people laughing while doling out sage words of wisdom about social distancing and how to behave during the pandemic. Click here for one of [Pluto's early pandemic broadcasts.](#)

77. Hank the most fashionable Newfoundlander made a splash. Hannah and Adam Heil, who reside on a remote farm in northern Wisconsin, decided to have some fun with their lovable Newfoundland hound, Hank. The couple had fun styling Hank's flowing mane into various creative hairstyles and dressing the patient Newfoundlander up in a range of crazy costumes with accompanying accessories. The couple shared daily images of Hank on their Instagram account, showing him dressed up as, among many other costumes, a fortune teller, cow, and "Joe Exotic" from the reality TV series *The Tiger King*.

78. Unmasking acts of kindness. Here's just one of a gazillion examples of random acts of kindness that happened during the pandemic. When Singapore resident Jennifer Le noticed crowds of older men and women forced to queue outside pharmacies for three to four hours to buy face masks, she took matters into her own hands and ordered masks online to give them out for free at the city's Sengkang station.

79. Friendly neighborhood Spider-Men wove up some fun. To put smiles on children's faces, a man in Stockport, England, started dressing up as Spider-Man and taking to the streets to entertain kids, during his government-mandated daily exercise time. The fun idea spun off and soon there were several Spider-Men showing up, and even a site where children could request a visit from the masked crusader.

80. Friendly neighborhood postcards. Becky Wass, from Falmouth, England, wanted to help those in her hometown affected by the pandemic. Her creative idea ended up inspiring others worldwide to do the same. Wass created a printable PDF that could be downloaded and filled out by people self-isolating who needed support. The postcard allowed less confined people to fill in their contact details and then slip the postcard through neighboring postal boxes. Anyone who needed help picking up groceries, running errands, or who just wanted a friendly phone call to stem loneliness could connect with someone and get the support they needed.

81. Children’s artwork took center stage ... or at least the center of many living-room windows. Rainbows and supportive messages drawn by children popped up in windows worldwide as a way of sending thanks and showing appreciation to frontline health-care workers. The campaign started in earnest in Italy, with signs often featuring the slogan “*andrà tutto bene*,” which translates into “everything is going to be Okay”.

82. Mrs. Potato Head went viral. “My boss turned herself into a potato on our Microsoft Teams meeting and can’t figure out how to turn the setting off, so she was just stuck like this the entire meeting,” a Washington, D.C., woman tweeted, with a screen grab of the meeting revealing her boss as, well, a potato. The post quickly went viral with more than a million likes and garnered many sympathetic responses from people who could oh-so-easily relate.

83. Because it was still there ... people scaled Mt. Everest. Rory Southworth, a keen British climber and trail runner, asked his running community if anyone wanted to accompany him climbing to Everest’s base camp – virtually, that is. Around 30 runners joined him on his mission to ascend 5,364 meters (17,598 feet) using their stairs at home. It took them five days to complete their daunting mission.

84. If you can't go out into the world bring the world to you. One Dad went to hilarious efforts to recreate a movie theater, McDonald's, and Starbucks for his daughter and TikTok star Mia Finney. And wow did her dad commit to the bit, playing every role necessary to make each experience as authentic as possible. For the movie theater, he made popcorn, dressed up as a theater attendant, checked her ticket, and even added numbers to their seats. In a recreation of a Starbucks drive-thru, he used a nutribullet blender, Wii steering wheel, headset, and printed Starbucks logos to create an amazingly realistic look.

85. Showing local businesses the love. Surveys show that by and large people stepped up to show their appreciation and support for local businesses. "Buy local" soon became a worldwide rallying cry as shoppers showed their support for small, local businesses that were struggling.

86. Staycations exploded as local tourism boomed. Travel restrictions led to many people taking staycations in their own backyard. Countless travel blogs cropped up as intrepid travelers hit the road to explore their own cities, provinces, or states. Many did so because they also wanted to support local tourism operators and the pandemic gave them the gift of time to explore hidden gems on their own doorstep.

87. Quality family conversations. A study done by the Vanier Institute of the Family found that six in ten parents talked to their children more during the pandemic than they ever had before. Another study found that 67% of children surveyed reported having more meaningful conversations with their parents.

88. More family dinners. Surveys revealed that family dinners, where all members of the family were present and accounted for, spiked dramatically.

89. Talking to my future self. Canadian comedian Julie Nolke created a series of hilarious videos featuring her future-self explaining the pandemic to her present-self. Check them out here: [Explaining the pandemic to my past self.](#)

90. Slow down! I know this wasn't the case for everyone, but for many there truly was a dramatic slowdown in the pace of their lives and a newfound appreciation of living a slower-paced life.

91. Prioritizing time. For a lot of people, the pandemic was an opportunity to reflect on what truly mattered to them, including the people that mattered to them and how they spent their limited time. This meant, perhaps for the first time ever, a lot of people took a hard look at *how* they spend their time and *who* they spend their time with.

92. The rise of the “anywheres.” Ari Blaff used the term “anywheres” in an article to describe how remote work had leveled the playing field for many workers around the world. For various reasons, these people were unable to move prior to the pandemic to work with a desired company. But with the huge increase in remote and hybrid workplaces, this is no longer the “jobstake” it once was.

93. A return to rural communities. Lots of people took advantage of remote work options as a chance to move from high-priced big cities to smaller communities, some for economic reasons, others for lifestyle choices.

94. People's pearly whites perhaps got pearlier. Dental office restrictions resulted in a huge increase in the purchase of electric toothbrushes, as people looked for ways to take better care of their teeth.

95. Creative marketing opportunities. The orthodontists from SmileattheWorld.com jumped on the pandemic as the perfect time to erect billboards featuring a woman wearing a mask with the tagline: "Best time ever to get braces." And there was the dentist practice that left "we miss you" care packages on the front doors of their clients' homes during the lockdown. Of course, it wasn't just dental practices – thousands of businesses adopted creative strategies to market their wares or connect with their customers in innovative ways.

96. Innovative distancing strategies became the norm. One shop turned their floor distancing requirements at the checkout counter into a chance for patrons to dance to hokey pokey, while restaurants adopted strategies that included giant stuffed teddy bears or mannequins sitting in seats to ensure people remained safely distanced.

97. The dreaded accordion rush never happened. When certain products (hello toilet paper) were flying off the shelves at the start of the pandemic, one music store owner took preventive action by instituting a rationing policy in his store ... for accordions. Yup, sadly, people were only permitted to purchase two accordions per family at his music shop.

98. Wacky humor rose to the occasion. From popular social media memes (“They said a mask and gloves were enough to wear to the grocery store, but they lied, everybody else had clothes on.”) to people photobombing their spouse’s video meetings, people flexed their funny bone throughout the pandemic. I want to give a special shoutout to the husband who would slip into the background when his wife was on a business video meeting and pretend to work on his laptop at the table behind her, all the while dressed as Batman or Waldo from “Where’s Waldo.”

99. Humanity won the day. It’s easy to dwell on the small percentage of people who didn’t embrace the spirit evoked through the “we are all in this together” slogan. Let’s, instead, focus on the majority of humankind that rose to the challenge to support their neighbors and their communities. Let’s focus on how health-care workers, artists, entertainers, teachers, coaches, volunteers, truck drivers, cleaners, frontline workers, creative entrepreneurs, and an ocean of unsung everyday heroes stepped up to support humankind through their kindness, generosity, and humor. Let’s instead raise a glass to the people who chose to make it their mission to encourage a pandemic of empathy and compassion.

And let’s do whatever we can, through our everyday choices, words, and deeds, to keep that spirit alive forever more!

Michael Kerr is a Canadian Hall of Fame speaker who researches, writes, and speaks about inspiring workplace cultures, inspiring leadership, and businesses that leverage their humor resources to drive outrageous results.

Michael is the author of eight books, including, [The Humor Advantage: Why Some Businesses Are Laughing All the Way to the Bank](#) and [The Jerk-Free Workplace: How You Can Take the Lead to Create a Happier, More Inspiring Workplace](#).

To learn more about Michael’s presentations, for articles and videos on how you can create a more rocking workplace, to sign up for his weekly *Inspiring Workplaces* eNewsletter, or just to connect with Michael, hop on over to www.MikeKerr.com