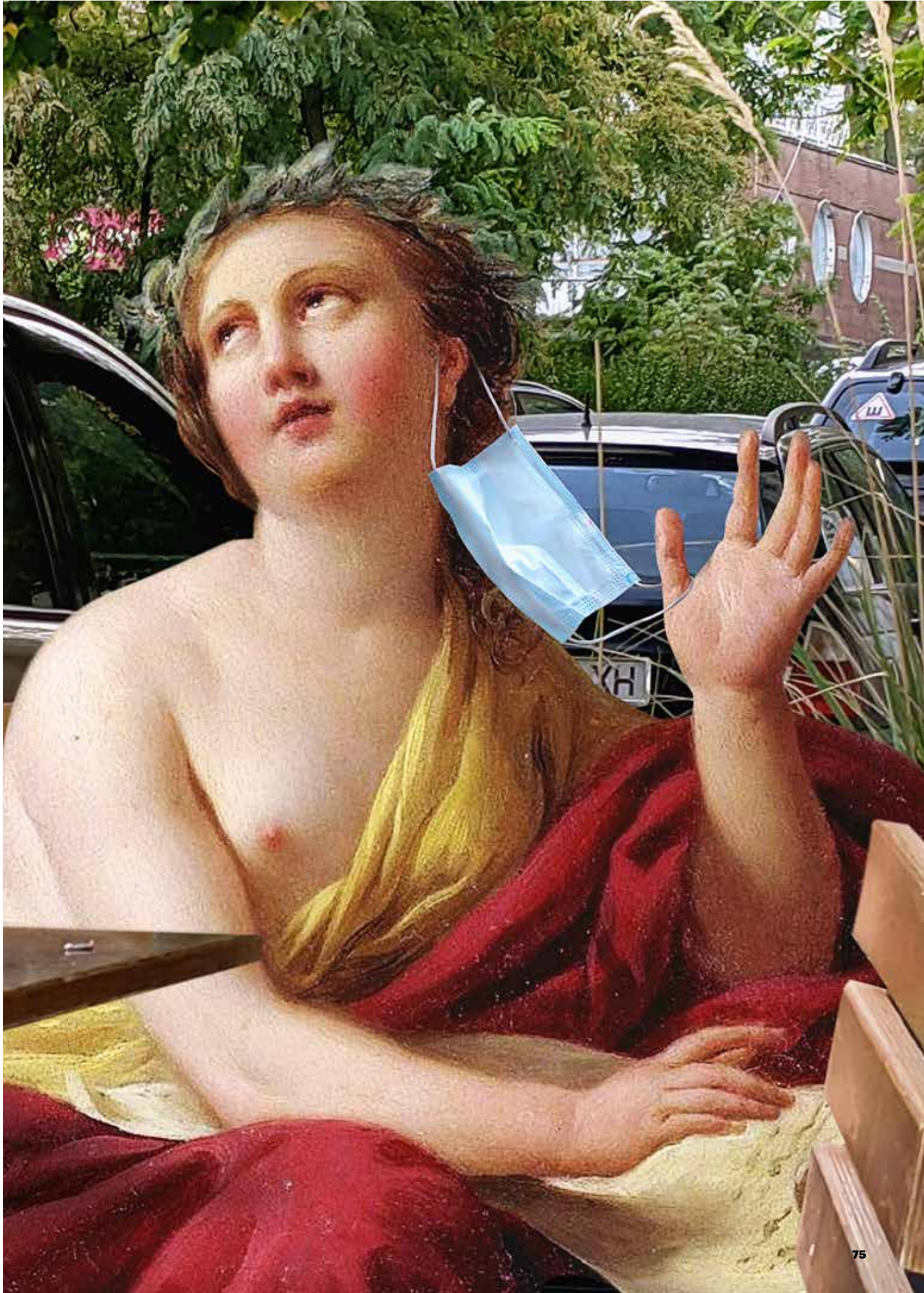


HOW WE LIVE NOW

IN 2020, THE WORLD
CHANGED FOREVER—
THE WAY WE LOVE,
THE WAY WE LOOK,
THE WAY WE WORK.
WELCOME TO A NEW
ERA OF HUMAN LIFE.
HOW ARE YOU DOING?

ARTWORK BY
ALEXEY KONDAKOV





WE THE PEOPLE ARE STRESSED OUT.

T

o be alive is to experience stress. Or, to be more dramatic: Life is suffering. But none of us could have prepared for the stress—abject, encompassing—that 2020 would bring. In January, America began the year with the baseline anxiety that the killing of an Iranian general by a U.S. drone strike might plunge us into World War III. Things generally went south from there.

Now, as COVID-19 works its way through the country, so does another ailment. Risk factors include sudden changes in routine, social isolation, fear of getting sick or making others sick, and financial insecurity. Symptoms range from nausea to hives. To get a better picture of how the pandemic has shifted the American psyche, I spoke with therapists across the country—and every provider I asked said mental health conditions like chronic stress, anxiety, and depression have spiked since March.

Stress isn't always this expansive and threatening. But when you factor in a global health crisis that adds emotional and physical stress and subtracts many coping mechanisms, it can manifest in new, seemingly unconquerable ways. "If you've had a hard day, you can't just go out for a run or head to a friend's house," says Austin-based therapist Grace Dowd. "These things might not be safe."

Losing your hobby or a familiar routine is enough to provoke grief, but probably nothing is as profound as the loss of connection with other people, of all the nuance and support of in-person interaction. Now, deciding whether to see a friend feels a lot like being forced to make a choice between your physical and mental health.

"There are often no right answers, but the consequences [of every decision] feel so high," says Ali Mattu, a clinical psychologist in the San Francisco Bay area. "Everything feels high stakes."

There's a cruel feedback loop to chronic stress: Anxiety can trigger physical symptoms, like nausea or a sore throat, which can create new anxieties about catching the virus and/or contributing to a pandemic. Like body, like mind: All of this persistent, mounting stress in our everyday lives can exacerbate existing mental health conditions, or trigger new ones. Jessica Harris, a therapist based in Maryland, says she's seeing more cases of anxiety and depression among her clientele; plus, people who have been sick themselves or lost a loved one to COVID-19 are showing signs of trauma. According to Mattu, chronic stress is also known to impact physical health, even compromising the immune system. And the strain is worse for Black Americans during yet another public referendum on police

violence and systemic racism. Ednesha Saulsbury, a therapist at Be Well Psychotherapy in New York City, reports that many of her Black clients are dealing with PTSD symptoms, anxiety, hypervigilance, and avoidance since the death of George Floyd in May.

Apologies if reading this has so far created more anxiety in your own life, but we promise, there is good news: Stress has spiked for most of us, but therapists say personal growth has too. For example, some people are taking stock of their lives and rearranging priorities to match their values. Dowd says a crisis of this scale can enable people to pull the trigger on major life decisions they had been putting off, such as moving in with a partner, quitting a job they hate for a more satisfying one, or getting married or divorced. She chalks this up to people having ongoing feelings of restlessness and being "stuck." "The pandemic is the great accelerant," she says, citing a strange blend of boredom and anxiety that can fast-track plans to fruition.

A sense of hopeful desperation amid a complete absence of certainty is also leading people to rekindle old spiritual practices, or start new ones. Mindfulness practices, meditation, and yoga—especially practiced first thing in the morning as a tone-setter for the inevitably stressful day ahead—help people be more present, even taking the edge off anxiety symptoms, Saulsbury says.

More good news: Therapy has become a bigger priority than ever. Early on in the pandemic, that wasn't necessarily the case: Saulsbury says numerous clients dropped out of therapy due to financial insecurity or the lack of privacy in tiny New York apartments (at least one of her patients had to conduct therapy in the bathroom). But several months in, the tide has turned. Now, she says, more people are willing, even desperate, to talk through their problems.

Everyone has a different story, but a common theme in session is self-compassion. People beat themselves up about not achieving at work the way they did pre-pandemic, or for being "bad friends" or "bad partners," which creates a sense of ongoing, low-level guilt. Both Dowd and Saulsbury say they focus on normalizing disappointment and grief—these are, as they say, unprecedented times—and encouraging people, in general, to take it easier on themselves.

With all the unexpected pain and confusion 2020 brought, it's easy to view the year as a wash. But Saulsbury says she doesn't see it that way and neither do an astounding number of her clients. "I talk to a lot of people who say 2020 helped them sit with their feelings in a way they hadn't before, to figure out what they wanted, and to figure out what's important to them," she says. "So many people have lost their lives. It makes sense that we're thinking about ours in a different way." Or, in other words: After a long night, dawn is inevitable.

Ashley Abramson is a writer in Minneapolis.



WE'RE WORKING

LONGER

In a June interview, Stanford University economist Nicholas Bloom estimated that the COVID-19 pandemic had caused the layoffs of 3 in 10 Americans, asked 2 out of 10 to risk their lives for “essential” business, and pushed the grateful others to the gauzy line between work-life balance. As organizations in our society—corporations, universities, government agencies—whittle down budgets, American workers feel pressure to make themselves as indispensable as possible. For those who previously worked office jobs (even as that adjective becomes less and less useful) that pressure is more than likely bearing down on them at their kitchen table or bedroom desk. A study published this past summer that observed 3.1 million employees found that workdays under lockdown had become almost an hour longer on average—and that was just a couple of months into what’s sure to be a lasting shift.

Lasting, because this whole setup is... actually working pretty well. So are we: A May survey by Global Workplace Analytics and workplace consulting firm Iometrics found that around 80 percent of employees believe they’re more productive when working from home (and 70 percent of managers say it’s either the same or better). Seventy-six percent want to work from home at least one day a week even after the pandemic is sorted out, and most would prefer at least two days at home, with fewer than 10 percent itching to return to their cubicle full-time.

But having your home suddenly transformed into your workspace can create problems for those of us hoping to delineate, instead of blur, our work-life balance. In the before times, most people were expected to work during the hours when they were in the office. When your office is also your house, does that mean you’re on the clock 24/7? Working from home might mean you are less distracted by corporate responsibilities, but most companies are ill-equipped to unburden their employees of their home responsibilities, which did not magically vanish when they were asked to turn their living room into a Zoom set. “You’re forced to engage in multiple roles,” explains Tessa West, an associate professor in the

and... better than ever?

psychology department at New York University. “You’re a mother, you’re a spouse, you’re taking care of a dog, you’re also trying to work—chronic stress really piles up.” (According to a report from Boston Consulting Group, parents in the U.S. are spending nearly twice as much time managing chores and schooling, with mothers devoting 15 more hours per week on average than fathers.)

One way to attempt some sort of physical barrier between work and nonwork hours is to carve out a home office, even if it’s just a corner of a room. Remote work support is something Anita Kamouri, vice president and cofounder of Iometrics, is adamant that companies need to provide for remote employees: “You can’t just be sitting at a kitchen table for eight hours a day.” California, Iowa, Massachusetts, Montana, New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C., all have labor laws that say companies must pay for “necessary expenditures” for employees to do their jobs from home, though what counts as “necessary” varies widely depending on your position—and has likely changed since the pandemic.

Once that company-funded (best of luck!) home office is set up, it’s on employees to manage their own time. West and Kamouri agree that flexible workers who are good at multitasking and don’t get distracted by “chronic uncertainty” will most easily thrive in our new reality. Their suggestion is as straightforward as it is effective: Make a daily schedule. It’s the only way to keep yourself on track and ensure your work time doesn’t entirely bleed into your personal time.

But even with the most rigid of boundaries, a crisis of this scale amplifies the idea of “work” beyond what you do for money. For essential *and* employed contingents, its associated stress can take on monstrous new forms: the fear of getting sick, of losing a paycheck, of losing a home. At this moment, work transcends what we do for money. It’s how we get through each day.

Kara McGrath is Allure.com’s deputy editor.

WE PROTEST. OR WE PERFORM.

The revolution will not be grammed.

On the second day of June, Instagram was swarmed with black squares in the name of solidarity, which, oddly enough, made a spectacle of a movement, but not in the best light (or filter, rather). Pitch-black boxes—intended to express solidarity with the Black Lives Matter campaign in response to the killings of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Ahmaud Arbery—flooded the platform, effectively drowning out the voices of organizers and protesters.

The BlackLivesMatter hashtag, and indeed parts of the movement, fell victim to a mass gesture of performative activism, which gave nothing to the minority forced to social distance during one of the most significant political times in their lives. What we have known about social media became heartbreakingly clear: People were interested in change, but they were more interested in appearing interested.

#BlackoutTuesday did nothing to relieve the traumas of racism. It did ignite a discussion about what constitutes protest. Social media is reactionary. It prioritizes immediate user responses to everything from cute cat videos to racial injustice and socioeconomic inequity. The Movement for Black Lives has helped illuminate centuries of deeply entrenched American racism. It is impossible to respond and synthesize that quickly. Hiring

WE'RE DRINKING

MORE.

Whether or not we want to. (But if you don't, there's a market for you too.)

INCREASE IN LISTENS TO THE "PANIC ATTACK" MEDITATION ON BREETHE, A MINDFULNESS APP, IN SEPTEMBER 2020, COMPARED WITH SEPTEMBER 2019. ANOTHER POPULAR PROGRAM: A MEDITATION INTENDED TO REDUCE CORONAVIRUS-SPECIFIC ANXIETY.



340%

a graphic designer to crank out a social post containing a Black hand "standing together" with a white one is not enough. The Black community has to be seen, heard, and, in some cases, hired to work toward actual change. Everybody lives on the internet. But the work happens in the real world.

Jennet Jusu is a writer and graphic designer in Brooklyn.

It's 4:45 p.m. on a Wednesday. Specifically, it's 4:45 p.m. on the 29th Wednesday I've spent working from home. My gaze floats to the bar cart in my living room-slash-office. I wonder if I'm still technically on the clock, but then remember there no longer is a clock. Some days I wake up at the crack of dawn and crash by sundown; other days I struggle to be up and dressed for a Zoom call at 9 a.m., but then work well into the evening. So if time is merely a construct, does that mean happy hour is now... any hour?

According to data from Drizly, an online platform through which you can order all manner of alcohol straight to your door, the answer is yes. During 2019, 63 percent of orders were placed between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. But this year, just 54 percent of orders were placed during those typically "happy" hours. And from early morning to late night, the orders were much, much larger: The average value of a single order increased by nearly 50 percent between April and June as lockdowns took hold across the country. Drizly experienced a 136 percent increase in customers during that same quarter.

Those numbers suggest a U-turn in the way we collectively drink. Before the pandemic, the sober-curious movement—the premise of which is controlled, conscious consumption—was on an upward trajectory, fueled by social media-friendly initiatives like Dry January and Sober October. Of course, it's hard to say how people are consuming in the confines of their own home, even if we can track when and how much alcohol is delivered to their doorstep. But people were certainly talking a lot about only drinking a little.

Based on an informal poll of my friends and my feeds, that talk has largely ceased. It's no secret that people experiencing acute stress may be more likely to seek out substances like alcohol that might help them deal with it. And when stress is accompanied (and perhaps caused) by a warping of the very concept of time, well, as many of us have learned, that likelihood increases. "I think it's a combination of stress and autonomy. Without our normal routine to rely on, we might see ourselves behave in new, out-of-character ways," says Ursula Whiteside, a clinical psychologist with the University of Washington in Seattle and CEO of NowMattersNow.org. "A lot of the time, we stay on track because we have somewhere to be and something to do, but so much of that structure is gone." And even when there's a Zoom meeting at 3 p.m., if you turn off your webcam, you're pretty much on your own.

"Alcohol consumption is something that's so personal and at the same time ingrained in many, many aspects of life, ranging from celebration to devastation," says Hilary Sheinbaum, a New York City-based writer and author of *The Dry Challenge*. "I've talked to friends who have consumed more alcohol in the past few months than ever before; [but] on the other hand, some have been drinking less because they have fewer opportunities to [do so] in social situations." If you are in the former camp, consider exploring online resources provided by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. "In general, any increase in drinking during the pandemic could be a cause for concern," says George F. Koob, the organization's director, "particularly if the increase stems from an attempt to cope with the stress and anxiety associated with the crisis."

The urge to sip something as the sun sets over your home office might best be satiated by a new wave of nonalcoholic and lower-ABV (alcohol by volume) beverages, all of which still have feel-good vibes. There's Ghia, the nonalcoholic aperitif launched by former Glossier executive Mélanie Masarin, which packs botanicals like elderflower, ginger, and rosemary extracts into one aesthetically pleasing bottle. Recess peddles what is essentially souped-up sparkling water, bursting with buzzy ingredients like hemp extract (for calming) and ginseng (for focus). The brand Kin's "euphoric" cocktails are dosed with nootropics, compounds that may support cognitive function.

Lower-ABV options include hard kombucha from brands like Kombrewcha and Jiant, and Wild Arc Farm's piquette, a fresh, fizzy take on white wine (with a lot less of the white wine). Cheers! There's something for everybody.

Dianna Mazzone is Allure's senior beauty editor.

WE'RE REDEFINING WHAT BEAUTY MEANS.

*A side effect of disaster:
reevaluating one's priorities.*

Global events have always influenced the way humans groom, usually in unpredictable ways. During WWII, beauty was a propaganda tool: Women were urged to wear make-up as a sign of patriotism, a way to maintain their femininity while working jobs that were traditionally filled by men, and as a means to lift the spirits of husbands and brothers and male strangers fighting overseas. Global hardships always impact the beauty industry and, in return, how we take care of ourselves. For the first time in decades, the beauty industry is poised to shrink 15 percent overall, undoing years of growth in a fraction of that time.

In March we were instructed on what was essential to live; beauty was not on the list. Malls, department stores, and stand-alone beauty retailers turned off their lights. Local, neighborhood beauty supply stores, which often carry essential supplies beyond synthetic hair and lip gloss, also closed. As we prepared to limit trips to the grocery store, we took stock and used what we had in our beauty cabinets. We canceled our hair appointments. We had to reorient ourselves.

Theresa Schneider, an account manager in Cincinnati, and one of many who had to sever her aesthetic rituals, is adjusting how she takes care of herself in a virtual work world where she's still expected to look presentable for Zoom meetings. "Through these video experiences, I've had to become comfortable "in the skin, I'm in," she says. "But I miss chatting it up with my hairdresser and the amazing shampoo head and neck massages. They are not the same when you do it yourself."

Salons are feeling her absence. Soaring online sales for nail polish and hair color suggest that people are primping in private. Salons are trying their best

(many, if not all, working at reduced capacity), but finding it impossible to forecast their futures. Some Black women, in particular, have taken this opportunity to play at home and experiment with styles they rarely had time to try in the not-so-distant past. Samira Ibrahim, a marketing consultant in Los Angeles, used to get braids done every two to three months, but is doing her natural hair for the first time in a long while. "To be honest, I think a lot of it has to do with the respectability politics of workplaces," she says of having the space to reconsider her hair. "I've been way more relaxed." (She's referring to her hair, but still—what a phrase to say in 2020!)

With the notable exceptions of eye and brow makeup, cosmetics sales

are down across the board; prestige brands alone are seeing a 55 to 75 percent revenue loss, according to McKinsey. What people are buying: the appearance of wellness. Luxury retailer Violet Grey describes its best-sellers as "natural" makeup. People want to look good, but now have time to redefine and, maybe, embrace what "looking good" means for them.

A recent boom in plastic surgery might suggest something else: that people are more insecure than ever after gazing at themselves for hours on end. But it's important to note that this spike occurs after a suspension of elective procedures. If you rescheduled every social event you had to cancel in March, April, and



WE'RE

WASTING AWAY

Humans are not Earth's best tenants. We probably don't even crack the top 10. But in a general effort to clean up the place, we began to use information that environmentalists and climate scientists had been sharing with us for years. Then a pandemic happened.

In some ways, the planet is one of the few entities that has seen a major upside: As flights were canceled and cars remained in park, air pollution fell to unprecedented levels around the world. "I've lived in New Delhi my whole life and there's never been a blue sky," said Indian beauty editor Vasudha Rai when *Allure* checked in with her in the spring. "Now I sit in my garden, look at that blue sky, inhale and exhale." As the world has eased restrictions, reopening slowly, most of its inhabitants have kept the radius of their travel shrunken significantly. More families are choosing a bubble lifestyle (living and socializing with a small, core group of people who agree on the same terms of quarantine) and enjoying the privileges of shared living. A September McKinsey poll found that postpandemic, those surveyed anticipated walking and biking more than they had prior to the coronavirus and eschewing air travel for car travel. (That said, the airline industry—one of the major antagonists in the climate crisis—is expected to recover.)

Alexey Kondakov is an artist and illustrator based in Kiev, Ukraine.



May, you might be seeing a boom in your personal life. This is all to say, it remains to be seen how literally the face of beauty will change when things approach normal again.

"I'm okay not wearing makeup when I do go into the office, shopping, out to dinner," my mother told me recently. "I look just fine without it!" When I was growing up, my mom was a licensed hairstylist. Experimenting with beauty products was a way of life. Knowing my mother, an older version of myself, feels content without wearing makeup on Zoom calls surely means I can do the same. The message feels clear: Take me as I am. We'll see if it sticks.

Darian Harvin is a writer in Los Angeles.

again.

We've made at least temporary (but hopefully not) lifestyle changes that reduce our Earth-warming carbon emissions, but we've taken a bad turn on the ocean-choking waste part of our planetary abuse. COVID-19's early days also came with an immediate dive back into the familiarity of single-use products we had finally started to avoid. Disinfectant wipes, latex gloves, and multiple layers of packaging felt like protection against the unknown. The National Waste & Recycling Association estimated that, in some cases, individuals created as much as 30 percent more waste than pre-COVID. But as individuals worked at home, ate meals at home, hosted (virtual) events at home, we also gained a new consciousness of exactly what we consume—and just how much we send out in the trash. A newfound, conscience-soothing passion for recycling rose in some of us, sorting and sifting in the absolute, by-the-book, right way. But, as *Allure* has told you before and will keep repeating: Only 9 percent of all plastic waste ever produced has actually been turned into something that we are able to use again (i.e., recycled). "We have somehow twisted recycling into [being] about doing the right thing," says Tom Szaky, CEO of TerraCycle, a recycling company that prides itself on being able to recycle the unrecyclable. "The only things recycled anywhere in the world are the things that can be recycled at a profit." And, for the most part, there's simply no market there. It's beyond time to redefine recycling not as a moral imperative but as a mercenary one—and to remember that new definition before the plastic ever makes it into your hand.

Just in the past few weeks, as of this writing, with so much more information on how the virus travels (in the air and not on surfaces, so wear your masks and socially distance, people!), there has been a recommitment to waste reduction in many areas. But for better or worse, the onus really remains on individuals for now. "Companies have no obligation to solve the waste problem that [a product] creates after it goes to the consumer," says Kate Kurera, deputy director of Environmental Advocates NY. So the choices we make matter. Wildly. Money is power. Withholding it pressures companies that are not living up to your sustainability standards to change.

Call your congresspeople and senators to ask for waste and recycling regulations. Keep an eye on the Environmental Protection Agency's recent proposal for a National Recycling Strategy and Senator Tom Udall's Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act. Call and write to your favorite companies and ask them to make choices more in line with a movement toward zero waste. Use those woven grocery totes. Use the ever-proliferating (and ever-more-charming) reusable, machine-washable masks. And use your voice.

Cotton Codinha is a writer in Brooklyn.