

**LA 11 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Round of School Work, April 2020**  
**Mr. Radtke**

**ASSIGNMENT #1**

**The Common Application Announces 2020-2021 Essay Prompts**

Thousands of colleges around the country use the Common App for their application process. To help you get started thinking about college – and even applying to college, I would like you to CHOOSE ONE of the following prompts from the Common App and handwrite or type an essay.

**The word limit on the essay will remain at 650. The word minimum is 500.** *The goal of these writing prompts is to help all applicants, regardless of background or access to counseling, see themselves and their stories within the prompts. They are designed to invite unencumbered discussions of character and community, identity, and aspiration.*

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?

**Below, I am posting a “sample essay.”**

**String Theory—Joanna**

If string theory is really true, then the entire world is made up of strings, and I cannot tie a single one. This past summer, I applied for my very first job at a small, busy bakery and café in my neighborhood. I knew that if I were hired there, I would learn how to use a cash register, prepare sandwiches, and take cake orders. I imagined that my biggest struggle would be catering to demanding New Yorkers, but I never thought that it would be the benign act of tying a box that would become both my biggest obstacle and greatest teacher.

On my first day of work in late August, one of the bakery's employees hastily explained the procedure. It seemed simple: wrap the string around your hand, then wrap it three times around the box both ways, and knot it. I recited the anthem in my head, "three times, turn it, three times, knot" until it became my mantra. After observing multiple employees, it was clear that anyone tying the box could complete it in a matter of seconds. For weeks, I labored endlessly, only to watch the strong and small pieces of my pride unravel each time I tried.

As I rushed to discreetly shove half-tied cake boxes into plastic bags, I could not help but wonder what was wrong with me. I have learned Mozart arias, memorized the functional groups in organic chemistry, and calculated the anti-derivatives of functions that I will probably never use in real life—all with a modest amount of energy. For some reason, after a month's effort, tying string around a cake box still left me in a quandary.

As the weeks progressed, my skills began to improve. Of course there were days when I just wanted to throw all of the string in the trash and use Scotch tape; this sense of defeat was neither welcome nor wanted, but remarks like "Oh, you must be new" from snarky customers catapulted my determination to greater heights.

It should be more difficult to develop an internal pulse and sense of legato in a piece of music than it is to find the necessary rhythm required to tie a box, but this seemingly trivial task has clearly proven not to be trivial at all. The difficulties that I encountered trying to keep a single knot intact are proof of this. The lack of cooperation between my coordination and my understanding left me frazzled, but the satisfaction I felt when I successfully tied my first box was almost as great as any I had felt before.

Scientists developing string theory say that string can exist in a straight line, but it can also bend, oscillate, or break apart. I am thankful that the string I work with is not quite as temperamental, but I still cringe when someone asks for a chocolate mandel bread. Supposedly, the string suggested in string theory is responsible for unifying general relativity with quantum physics. The only thing I am responsible for when I use string is delivering someone's pie to them without the box falling apart. Tying a cake box may not be quantum physics, but it is just as crucial to holding together what matters.

I am beginning to realize that I should not be ashamed if it takes me longer to learn. I persist, and I continue to tie boxes every weekend at work. Even though I occasionally backslide into feelings of exasperation, I always rewrap the string around my hand and start over because I have learned that the most gratifying victories come from tenacity. If the universe really is comprised of strings, I am confident that I will be able to tie them together, even if I do have to keep my fingers crossed that my knots hold up.

### **Here is a critique of this essay – to highlight its strengths ...**

"Joanna does a great job of grabbing your attention from the first sentence by comparing her struggles learning to tie up bakery boxes to string theory. We get a glimpse at her personality throughout the essay—she is not afraid to laugh at herself or admit failure. She uses her story to illustrate that she recognized a weakness, refused to give up, and is able to grow from it; which gives us a sense of how she will tackle challenges here at JHU. Her voice definitely came through in this essay. She also used the space effectively to tell us a lot about who she is—her love of music and science, her dedication to a part-time job, and her ability to put things in perspective. Even though the actual topic itself—learning to tie string around bakery orders—seems narrow in scope, it allowed us to see how well-rounded her interests were and really get to know her through her writing."

**ASSIGNMENT #2 – Read the articles below. Annotate – with words written in the margins – at least 5 times per article. There are SIX articles attached here. Read and annotate ALL OF THEM.**

### **1. Neighbors create "bear hunts" for kids amid coronavirus**

Children in one Lafayette, Louisiana, neighborhood, maps and binoculars in hand, have been on a safari during the week of March 23 in search of teddy bears.

It's an extension of something that's occurring in other places, including London, England, to keep children entertained while they're out of school and sticking close to home because of the coronavirus: Placing teddy bears in street-facing windows so children can hunt them out on walks and bicycle rides through their neighborhood.

The idea may be based on a book called "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury.

In Lafayette, parents and residents got together on a neighborhood Facebook page since the beginning of March to spread the word, and teddy bears started appearing in windows.

Myrtle Place resident Jaci Russo, who has three bears in her windows, said she first observed it in mid-March.

"People were putting bears in windows, flower beds, along fence lines," she said, "and posting their addresses [on the neighborhood Facebook page] so people can map a route and parents can take their kids walking on a bear hunt."

And the children are serious about it, Russo said, taking paper and pens and mapping routes. Some even bring binoculars to help them hunt out the cuddly creatures.

"I love it," Russo said. "It's a great way for neighbors to help out."

In the late morning, when parents in her neighborhood walk their children to school to pick up lunch, they're hunting for teddy bears, Russo said. In the afternoons, children can be seen making chalk drawings of teddy bears and uplifting phrases on driveways and sidewalks, she said. Some parents are even hanging lines in their front yards to display their children's drawings of bears.

One Oaklawn resident posted March 23 afternoon how proud she is to live in the neighborhood. Her daughter spotted 50 teddy bears on their walk on March 23.

If you don't live in the area you can start something similar in your neighborhood.

Teddy bears aren't the only thing adding cheer to homes and lives in Lafayette Parish, Louisiana.

In the Sawgrass Park neighborhood in south Lafayette Parish, rainbows are showing up all over the place, even when there hasn't been a rain shower.

Mary LeBlanc, who has two young children and another on the way, learned about the rainbows from her sister-in-law, who lives in New Orleans, and posted it on the neighborhood Facebook page. Word spread and children took out their crayons and markers to create beautiful rainbows they put in street-facing windows for a giant neighborhood I Spy game.

Children also are spreading rainbows outside, drawing them in chalk on sidewalks and driveways.

Some of the neighbors are posting their addresses on the Facebook page, inviting kids to stop by their street. Parents like LeBlanc and her husband, who are working from home during the coronavirus crisis, are taking family walks and bike rides searching out the rainbows.

"It's cheerful," LeBlanc said. "It's something to look forward to."

And who doesn't need a little cheer during these times?

## **2. For "chicken or egg" question, scientist offers a simple solution**

Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

Believe it or not, this question has its roots in ancient Greece, where philosophers used it as an excuse to argue about cause and effect. What's more, it's what is known as a paradox - a situation or statement that appears to present contradicting facts, both of which can logically be true.

Some might say the chicken came first, since you can't have an egg without a chicken to lay it. But others might argue the egg came first, since all chickens begin life inside of an egg.

A paradox, right? Not if you want to get technical. The question has a rather simple answer if you talk to an ancient egg expert.

"It's pretty straightforward," said Jasmina Wiemann, a molecular paleobiologist at Yale University. (Paleobiology is the science of fossil organisms.) "The egg is much older, evolutionarily, than the chicken."

Chickens, as we know them, probably became domesticated about 10,000 years ago. But the animals that they descend from, known as jungle fowl or Gallus, can be dated back 21 million years.

Now that might sound pretty ancient, but the incredible, edible egg has been around for hundreds of millions of years.

For instance, scientists recently discovered a fossilized bird from northwestern China with an egg stuck inside its body. At 110 million years old, this species, known as *Avimaia schweitzerae*, would have flitted about in a world dominated by dinosaurs. It's the most ancient bird egg ever discovered.

Eggs were around long before this, even. Dinosaurs, birds, reptiles and even mammals are known as amniotes, a branch of the vertebrate family tree that evolved approximately 300 million years ago, Wiemann said.

This pushes the origins of the egg back even further. However, these eggs would have looked quite a bit different from what's in your refrigerator.

The earliest eggs would have been soft, sort of like turtle eggs you might see on the beach, Wiemann said. The crunchy, brittle, protective coating came later.

By the way, if you thought it odd to see the mammals lumped into a group with egg-laying stegosauruses, crocs, ostriches and tortoises, you should know that egg-laying is part of our evolutionary history. In other words, if you go back far enough in time, humans have ancestors that would have laid eggs. And mature female humans today still produce eggs through a process called ovulation. The eggs stay inside of humans - and they're squishy and lack a shell.

Even weirder, some mammals still reproduce by laying eggs that can survive outside the body. They're known as monotremes, which include species such as the duck-billed platypus and echidna (pronounced ih-KID-nuh).

Now, here's a question for you - which came first, the egg or the echidna?

### **3. Why the U.S. census tries to count everyone**

Stand up, America. It's time to be counted.

This past week of March 23, a letter should have arrived where you live, asking the adult in charge to complete a form called the 2020 Census. The census (pronounced SEN-suss) is a once-every-10-years tally of everyone living in the United States. It asks who lives in a household, how they are related and their age, race and other information.

This is a huge task. It's important that everyone be counted because the federal government uses that information to determine how many seats in Congress each state should have. If a state loses population, it might lose a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. If its population is growing, it might gain a seat.

Equally important, census numbers help decide how to divvy up more than \$675 billion in federal money each year. Those funds help states and communities build roads, schools, hospitals and fire departments. More than 100 programs, including Head Start and food assistance for low-income people, also rely on the census to direct funds to where the need is greatest.

This year marks the 24th national people count, which the Constitution requires be held every 10 years. The first census, in 1790, was early in the presidency of George Washington. About 650 men set out on foot or horseback to count everyone living in their assigned areas.

President Washington and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson both thought the final number — nearly 3.9 million people — was low. Quarrels and quibbles have dogged just about every census since then.

After all, it isn't easy getting a snapshot of the entire country for a single day. (Census Day has been April 1 since 1930.) The U.S. population grows by one person every 23 seconds because of births in the nation and arrivals from other countries. People living in rural areas, the homeless and children who split their time between two homes present challenges to getting an accurate count. The U.S. Census Bureau says that about 1 million kids younger than age 5 were not counted in 2010. That was the highest number for any age group.

Officials have tried to simplify this year's process. For the first time, responses can be made online, as well as by phone and mail. To help people who speak little or no English, officials have prepared guides in 60 languages, plus Braille for the blind.

Each head of household — even someone living alone — must fill out a census form or face a fine. No citizenship question is asked. This has eased the concerns of some who said asking about citizenship would reduce the response rate of immigrants and result in less funding for their communities.

The Census Bureau is required by law to protect people's privacy. No one will be identified by name when officials analyze the numbers the census collects.

But for anyone tempted not to respond, know this: the people who are census takers are like a dog looking for that tasty bone it buried. They don't give up easily. Ignore their letter, and more will follow because they really want everyone to be counted.

#### **4. Why everything is closing for coronavirus: It's called "flattening the curve"**

South by Southwest (SXSW) is a huge music/film/tech/education festival. It brings hundreds of thousands of visitors to Austin, Texas, every March. When organizers canceled the festival it was only a matter of time before other major events also canceled.

As of March 13, many sports leagues have suspended their seasons. The National Basketball Association (NBA), National Hockey League (NHL) and Major League Soccer have suspended play. Major League Baseball (MLB) has pushed back the season start. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) canceled March Madness. March Madness is a college basketball competition every spring. If a team loses a game they are out of the competition. People fill out brackets with who they think will keep advancing to the championships.

Several universities have canceled spring football games. The Professional Golfers' Association (PGA) Tour canceled the Players Championship. And the future of the 2020 Summer Olympics in Japan is in doubt. And that's just sports.

School districts from Seattle, Washington, to Baltimore, Maryland, have closed schools. So have entire states, including Maryland, Michigan and Ohio. More than 100 colleges and universities have canceled all in-person

classes and moved online. The huge music festival Coachella has been postponed. So have a long list of concerts and music tours and all Broadway shows through April 12. Movie theaters may be next.

Even all Disney parks have closed their gates. This is only the third time Disneyland has closed the park. The first time was after U.S. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. The second time was after 9/11. Terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, hit the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

### **Economic Impacts**

The economic impacts of all these closures will be incredibly high. Canceling SXSW will mean a loss of more than \$350 million. This includes thousands of low-income workers' lost tips and wages. However, that won't even be close to how much it will cost sports teams and amusement parks to close down. So the decision to suspend seasons, cancel events and close up shop are not being made lightly.

And yet, there have only been about 1,660 cases of COVID-19 diagnosed in the United States. COVID-19 is short for coronavirus disease 2019. There have also been fewer than 50 deaths because of it in the United States. The coronavirus is a flu-like illness that began in China and has been spreading across the globe since December 2019.

Many people talk about the flu. Every year the flu sickens millions and kills tens of thousands of people. It is expected to sicken nearly 50 million people in the United States this year and kill as many as 52,000 this flu season.

So why is everyone making such a big deal about coronavirus? Why are events being canceled? Why are schools moving to online instruction? Especially when there are so few cases right now.

### **Slowing The Spread**

There's a good reason to "cancel everything." All these decisions by public officials and businesses are aimed at one goal: slowing down the spread of the virus to avoid overburdening a health care system that doesn't have the infrastructure to handle a sudden surge of tens of thousands of cases at once. Without mass closings, that surge is exactly what will happen, just as it has in Italy.

It's called "flattening the curve." And that's exactly what it is when you see it visually.

Image 2. What it means to "flatten the curve." The peak on the left represents the number of COVID-19 cases if no protective measures are taken, such as hand washing and social distancing. Protective measures can reduce how fast the virus spreads over time, hopefully preventing hospitals from becoming overburdened. The capacity of the health care system can change depending on the amount of resources and health care professionals available. Graph: Max Roser/Our World in Data. Modified by Newsela staff.

Epidemiologists study diseases and how they spread. They can somewhat predict how many cases of a disease are going to occur based on how the disease is behaving. Continuing business-as-usual allows cases to escalate rapidly in just a few weeks, spiking so high at once that they completely overwhelm hospitals. In such a scenario — such as Italy is facing now — more deaths are likely because there simply aren't enough hospital beds, enough face masks, enough IV bags, even enough healthy doctors and nurses to care for everyone at once.

However, if that same number of cases can be stretched out over months, never quite exceeding the health care system's capacity, then people will get the care they need. More health care providers can avoid illness and burnout, and fewer people are likely to die — as South Korea has shown.

But are we really headed for that many cases?

Yes.

As former Food and Drug Administration (FDA) commissioner Scott Gottlieb explained in a recent interview, the novel coronavirus — just declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization — is beyond containment. If it's not already in your community, it's coming soon. The only reason total U.S. cases aren't already skyrocketing is that coronavirus testing has been such a mess that too few people — just 77 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the whole week of March 8 — are being tested. You can't count cases you haven't identified yet.

But every indication is that the United States is on track to see the same exponential increase other countries are seeing, as scientist Mark Handley has been tracking on Twitter.

## **People Are Listening**

So what do we do to avert disaster? We have to flatten the curve. Fortunately, people are listening and the idea has caught on so well among armchair epidemiologists that the #flatteningthecurve and #FlattenTheCurve hashtags have trended several times on Twitter in recent days.

Clearly, public officials and businesses are listening to the warnings of public health officials, as evidenced by all the closings and cancellations. But to be effective, ordinary people need to do their part by avoiding as much as possible any crowds and places where large numbers of people congregate, such as movie theaters, malls and events that haven't been canceled.

### **5. "You have to face the darkness within you": Meet the real-life Jedi knights**

In the middle of a field in South Carolina, Alethea Thompson closed her eyes and attempted to sense her way forward. Thompson, now 35 years old, had spent years trying to find a spiritual home and had decided to try something new. Now, she was training to become a Jedi.

After 12 years with the Force Academy, an online community that provides educational courses on Jediism, Thompson is today a Jedi master. She explains that the Force Academy and most Jedi organizations don't prescribe strict rituals: there are no requirements on diet or clothing and no mass-style services. Jedis do, however, follow a code of ethics that centers on resisting negative emotions and promoting peace. They also believe in the Force – the ubiquitous energy field described in the "Star Wars" movies – and mindfulness is central to their belief system. "The foundation of who we are is meditation," says Thompson. "I will meditate for about 30 minutes, but it's not always the same kind of meditation. So, I don't sit there all the time and just hum. Meditation comes in many forms and that's what I try to teach in the community."

To most people, Jedis are the priestly, lightsaber-wielding warriors that existed a long time ago, in a fictional galaxy far, far away. Their creator, the "Star Wars" writer and director George Lucas, seems to have been heavily influenced by real religions and philosophies such as Buddhism, Taoism, Kabbalah and the medieval code of chivalry. This gives verisimilitude to the Jedi religion in the films. However, the real-world religion arguably has origins in an internet prank almost 20 years ago.

In the run-up to the 2001 United Kingdom (U.K.) census, an email went around encouraging people to record their religion on the form as Jedi, insisting that, if 10,000 people were to do so, Jediism would become a "fully

recognized and legal religion." "Do it because you love 'Star Wars' ... or just to annoy people," the email read. In the end, 390,127 people did just that. In Brighton and Hove, 2.6 percent of census respondents said they were Jedis. John Pullinger, the director of reporting and analysis at Britain's Office for National Statistics, said at the time the campaign was quite helpful. "Census agencies worldwide report difficulties encouraging those in their late teens and 20s to complete their forms. We suspect that the Jedi response was most common in precisely this age group."

Yet among the hundreds of thousands of pranksters were people who truly believed they could feel the Force. Since the census, various attempts have been made to codify Jedi beliefs into a coherent religion, such as the Church of Jediism, founded by 20-year-old Daniel Jones in 2006 in Anglesey, Wales.

But with its roots in a film aimed at children, Jediism is wide open for mockery. For instance, followers have to explain that they don't worship Yoda and, in fact, spend most of their time striving for spiritual growth and self-improvement rather than trying to shoot lightning bolts from their fingertips.

Today the U.K. Jedi community is estimated to have about 2,000 members – similar to the number of Scientologists in the country. However, their sincerity and numbers didn't sway the Charity Commission, which in 2016 rejected an application for charitable status from the Temple of the Jedi Order, a Jedi organization started in Beaumont, Texas.

This rejection may be just as well, as many Jedis consider Jediism a philosophy rather than a religion, a spiritual operating system on which any religious program can run. Followers say you can be a Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Christian or even an atheist Jedi.

Thompson herself had a complicated journey to Jediism. Her early childhood was difficult and she was taken into foster care. After she returned to her mother's home a year later, she was raised as a Catholic. But she became disillusioned after learning how the church regarded Mary. "It bothered me that this belief system would say you only worship one deity, but they treated Mary like a goddess," she says. When she was 13 years old, Thompson decided to worship the Sumerian gods Inanna and Enki. Then a close friend introduced her to the Force Academy.

There was one sticking point: "I hate 'Star Wars'!" she says. "I felt like it was a Western space opera." She was convinced only after hearing that the Force Academy aims to make Jediism compatible with other faiths.

Today, Thompson credits the spiritual practice with making her more tolerant, contemplative and empathetic. The Jedi, she says, had a "solid plan" on how she could become a "helpful force in the world."

Others say it has even saved their lives. Vishwa Jay, age 45, lives in Salt Lake City, Utah, and is a teacher of Buddhist philosophy, as well as the founder of a Jedi school. His early life was chaotic. He was taken into foster care at 7 years old and, before turning 18, had lived in five children's homes and had more than 70 foster placements. This unrelenting displacement meant Jay emerged as an angry young man without meaningful relationships. His anger got him into fights, but he says even this was because he was trying to connect with people. "I got into underground fighting. Suddenly, I had friends for the first time and I didn't know how to handle it." Jay was put off the bare-knuckle scene only after an opponent attacked him with an aluminum baseball bat.

In his early 20s, Jay got in trouble with the police. He ended up going to see a Hindu swami called Mrs. Stone. "I tend to try and be fairly rational about things. I was having a hard time accepting the reality of anything that she was trying to teach me on a spiritual level," Jay explains. Stone asked him what he held sacred. "I said Star Wars. She said: 'Star Wars, hmm, that's a great place to start.' Immediately, at that moment, I knew I was doomed," he says.

Jay began by studying the philosophy in the films and meditating. "One of the things that I learned from the Jedi philosophy was that being emotionally stable means facing the darkness within you. One of the foster homes I was living in had farms. And one of the things they do is take cow manure. After a while, it turns into fertilizer. So, the way that I explain it is you have to work through all of your (expletive) in order to get something to grow."

Jay, now a father of five, is no longer an angry young man using fists to make friends. He says much of his new happiness is down to Mrs. Stone. "I'm pretty sure that I would have ended up in the grave by now because I had no knowledge of myself. I had no real concern about anyone other than myself."

Jay promised his partner, who is not a Jedi, that he would not steer his children to Jediism, although his eldest daughter has found it herself. "She decided that, since it worked for me, it will probably work for her. In the last year she's started learning a bit about the philosophy." Does his Jedi Zen help, looking after five kids? "It does. Most people would be completely off their nog just trying to keep up."

Jay Tepley, age 38, is a meditation teacher based in London, England. Before she had even watched the films, people called her a Jedi. "Because of mind mastery. I teach people to make their minds stronger and repel other people's mental influence. I teach people to become better, stronger versions of themselves," she says.

Is she a real Jedi? "Well, it depends what you mean. I'm not a Jedi in this world's understanding, in terms of people being fans of the films and just dressing up in some peculiar way. I'm more of an actual Jedi from the film. If it were possible for them to travel here, they would recognize me as one of them." This is not to say she doesn't wear robes and, as well as teaching meditation, she teaches fencing at her lightsaber club. "Fencing is a great way of training your muscles, your focus and your sense of balance at the same time," Tepley says.

A true Jedi is never without their lightsaber. After all, in "Attack of the Clones," Obi Wan Kenobi tells Anakin Skywalker: "This weapon is your life." Everett Ratcliffe, who goes by the Jedi name Arisaig Winterthorn, concurs. "I use a lightsaber because it's really, really fun to use and it gets me out there every single day." Ratcliffe, age 26, is from Canada, but lives in Loughborough, Leicestershire. He discovered Jediism after leaving the Canadian army. "When I came to the Jedi path, I was using a cane to walk from an injury acquired in training during my time in the forces. I was fat, I hated myself and my mind was slipping as my life lacked direction. Now, I'm healthy," Ratcliffe says. After recovering from his injury, Ratcliffe began practicing lightsaber flow, a fencing form that entails spinning a sword or staff in intricate spirals. "It's really intensive on the body and there's just so much to learn to keep getting better at it."

In the "Star Wars" films, the Force is the supernatural energy that allows Jedis to levitate objects, confuse Stormtroopers and attack people from a distance. Among followers of Jediism, the Force is interpreted in many ways, but most consider it a metaphor rather than something that helps them choke people like Darth Vader. For Ratcliffe, it is an omnipresent energy field. "I gave myself to the Force and the Force gave me everything," he says. Can you feel this Force? "Of course, anyone can. Every time you drink a glass of water you're feeling the Force. Anything that can be experienced is an experience in the Force."

But he says: "You ask 10 Jedi, you'll get 10 different answers." He is not wrong: for Tepley, the Force is the energy that underlines our entire existence, Thompson thinks it accounts for miracles, Jay believes it might have been responsible for the Big Bang. Richard Sroka, a program analyst from Portland, Oregon, says the Force feels like a wellspring. "It feels like being a lot more alive, a lot more energetic," he says. "You're not worrying about tomorrow, you're not worrying about yesterday. You're living precisely when you are."

Like Jay, Sroka struggled with anger, and the nostalgia he had for the films drew him to Jediism. "It's the first thing that clicked," he says. After immersing himself in Jedi philosophy, Sroka felt better able to control his temper. "When I start to feel angry, I take a step back, view where it's coming from, identify what's causing it and find the solutions to it. That's where a lot of my connection to Jediism begins. It also taught me that sometimes you've got to disengage. You're not always going to be able to get through the situation."

Should we be mocking this belief system that sprung from our local multiplexes? Speaking to Jedi followers, it becomes clear that the lessons Jediism teaches are things that can be learned at Sunday school. The lessons include helping others, helping yourself, embracing the light and resisting the dark. In other words, be righteous and resist temptation. Sroka is philosophical about the fact most people won't take it seriously. "It came from a movie and people don't quite get it and that's fine," he says. Yet, he points out, that doesn't mean it cannot help people. "When I go to work out, I have the mental image of Kratos from 'God of War,'" he says referring to a popular video game. "Am I going to be able to hold two axes and do all those crazy stunts? Am I going to have those giant muscles? No. Am I going to have a great beard? Probably not, but if that's what gets me up and moving then why is that a bad thing?"

## **6. Teams are taking a timeout, but sports lessons are still timely**

Sports teams hung out a big sign the week of March 9: Closed Until Further Notice.

The National Basketball Association, National Hockey League, the NCAA college basketball championships, Major League Baseball and the Masters golf tournament all canceled or postponed their games because of the threat from the novel coronavirus outbreak.

The danger of spreading the virus makes it too risky to travel or gather in crowds, so playing sports has stopped.

But just because sports are not being played does not mean that sports are finished. Most kids never become professional athletes or play at the college level, so for most kids, sports are important because of the lessons they learn from playing on teams and competing.

Those lessons may be important in the coming weeks and months as everyone tries to cope with this national health emergency. Here are timely lessons:

## **Pay Attention**

There is no way to become good at a sport — or really anything — if you don't pay attention. Young athletes have to listen to their teachers and coaches and try to do what they say.

Years ago, coach Morgan Wootten of Maryland's DeMatha Catholic High School shared what he looked for in a basketball player. One of the first things Wootten said was, "I look for a player who will listen. If a player doesn't listen, he never gets better."

During this coronavirus crisis, everyone is going to have to listen to government officials and medical experts and follow their instructions carefully on the best ways to remain safe. We all have to pay attention.

## **Be A Good Teammate**

Another lesson kids get from playing sports is how to be part of a team. Good teammates think about the group, not just about how many points or goals they score.

This coronavirus outbreak is going to make things tough for kids' number one team: their families. Many parents will have to work in their house or apartment. Kids will be at home from school. No one will go out as often. At times like this, it's important for kids to think about how they can help their group or their team. Maybe you can help by cleaning up your bedroom or playing with a younger brother or sister. Think about the team, not just yourself.

## **Deal With Disappointment**

Maybe the biggest lesson kids learn from sports is how to cope with disappointment. Even the best players do not win every game or bat 1.000.

There will be disappointments during the coronavirus crisis. Maybe you were looking forward to your spring soccer or baseball season, and now the games are canceled. Or perhaps a family trip or party had to be postponed. This may be a time when you realize everything cannot turn out exactly as you wished. Sometimes you have to learn to live with disappointment and make the best of it.

Sports events may be closed, but the lessons we learn from sports are still important. Maybe more important than ever.