

The right stuff

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In a recent interview about what it meant for astronauts to have 'the right stuff,' NASA's James Picano said: "But within all of those people, we need the capability to get along well with one another..., to work cooperatively and to live effectively with one another. We're not talking about finding superhuman people. They don't exist. We're talking about finding people who are psychologically competent, who are trained to work well together with one another and to manage the relationships."

Hmmm...

Seems to me we might all benefit from consideration of these attributes in our daily lives.

Managing relationships is a challenge for some of us these days, particularly those whose interactions with others have always been largely dependent on physical proximity. And there seems to be a lot of anticipation building around the idea of 'getting back to normal,' with normal presumably defined as returning to our pre-COVID way of doing things. But what we considered normal at the close of 2019 is in many ways gone, never to return.

Being forced to adapt to and adopt a new way of doing things is an uncomfortable evolution for most folks. I know I haven't kept up on the range of social media channels as they've developed and I still prefer going to the grocery or hardware store over ordering online. But in the context of pandemic, I'm compelled to consider new ways of being and some of those ways will become habituated, part of my everyday pattern. Sure, some activities will spring back into some semblance of former patterns. But not all. And all things considered, that's probably a good thing.

As we figure out how to work together as a society post-COVID, I hope we'll consider the attributes Picano has identified as critical for astronauts living together in close quarters. Because working collaboratively, learning to "live effectively with one another" will definitely be included on any sane listing of the 'right stuff.'