

A pandemic can't keep this Orinda singer down



Orinda singer Mina Lim, 13.

Photo provided

By Sora O'Doherty

Mina Lim has put her musical talent to work, and can be found singing a Covid-19 parody on YouTube these days. The 13-year-old is familiar to the Lamorinda arts scene as a frequent competitor in the Lamorinda Idol contest, last year winning the 6-8 grade category and the group category with her group 4 O'Clock!

During spring break, while on lockdown, her mother June Lee Lim gave her an assignment to write her own parody. Mina came up with a poignant but amusing parody of "Part of Your World" from her favorite musical, "The Little Mermaid" with lyrics like, "I've got Purell and Lysol and Clorox; I've got

canned food and hand soap galore; You want toilet paper? I've got twenty ... (four); But who cares? No big deal ... I'm so BORED!!!!!!...."

Mina reported that "lots of people enjoyed it," including her teachers at Orinda Intermediate School. Next year Mina plans to attend Campolindo, to avail of their renown choir and musicals.

Mina is quite sensitive to the coronavirus because she herself suffered from a serious but unidentifiable illness last fall. Now she is sheltering at home with her mother and

father. Her grandparents are sheltering at home. Mina misses her family and friends, but uses Zoom and Facetime to keep in touch. "Only Mom goes out now," Mina says, as she and her father have asthma issues. June Lim added that they have friends in the health field, some of whom are in New York, so the situation is quite frightening. "We are keeping upbeat," she said, "trying not to dwell on it, and the parody has been a lot of fun, keeping our minds off it." People are sharing Mina's parody on social media.

Mina's parody can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9L8z2XF9Q0>

Five tips to managing anxiety in challenging times

By Linda Fodrini-Johnson

Staying healthy and managing stress is even more crucial to our lives now. Given "Stay in Place" orders, we have time to explore a variety of mindfulness practices both to change and improve our habits that will lead to better lives.

The current worldwide pandemic is causing sleepless nights, hand wringing and some strange behaviors. Fear can sometimes bring out the worst in us. However, I am also seeing some incredible acts of kindness and selflessness in neighbors helping neighbors.

The anxiety that many of us are experiencing related to the current COVID-19 epidemic is a "situational anxiety" brought on by something we can't very well control

outside changing our behaviors for a period of time.

Below are five tips and resources for balancing our emotions during this unprecedented time in our history:

1) Focus on the positives in your life and the world. Start your morning with a gratitude prayer or list of what you are thankful for. Read the comic strips before you read any news and save a positive story to read last. Say a daily affirmation. You could limit your news watching to every other day or once a week if you find it distressing.

2) Mindfulness exercises are a wonderful way of disconnecting from all emotions by connecting with your inner being and at the same time disconnecting from all the negativity and to-dos of our daily lives. This does not happen with one try. It is some-

thing that you need to do daily and increase the time of the exercise as you become more comfortable. Just learning to focus on your breathing can be a great first start - and it helps with sleeping too!

3) Get productive. Distraction is a great mind diversion when you are ruminating on your fears or unfounded beliefs. Have a list of projects you would like to complete and tackle one of them every time you get yourself in a worry-knot.

4) Exercise. If you start to worry or become anxious, take a walk or follow an exercise video. Yoga is a great exercise that is both a mindfulness practice and moves your body to be more flexible. If getting on the floor is a challenge, look for chair yoga.

5) Eat well. Diet is extremely important to mental health. Add immune boosting foods to

your diet like citrus, blueberries, almonds, mushrooms, green tea, and red bell peppers.

If your feelings are interfering with your daily life, such as trouble concentrating or increased use of alcohol, seek help. The Disaster Distress Hotline is 1-800-985-5990.

If you need to process your worries, reach out to a friend or professional. Sometimes it is just good to talk through our anxieties. The Eldercare Services Aging Life Care Professionals can take your calls and help with consultations on the phone or via FaceTime calls. The Home Care Assistance team is available to assist you with caregiving needs. Our teams are following very high standards to keep everyone healthy during this epidemic - call us at (925) 937-2018.



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One family finds silver lining during stay-at-home order



Moraga mother of three, Tami Shaffer, who is also owner and manager of children's play space Gymboree Play & Music in Lafayette, found some silver linings after the few first weeks of shelter-in-

place, the first being that her family was way overscheduled.

"Before SIP, I had a color-coded calendar on our kitchen wall (each person in our household had a color), in ad-



Photos provided

dition to a Google calendar to try and manage activities. After 5 weeks of SIP, I am realizing that maybe we went a little bit overboard," Shaffer explained. "Because of the overscheduling, we really

missed out on the simple pleasures. Before SIP, we rarely walked around our neighborhood. Now, we make it a point to take a family walk every day. We connect with neighbors and spend quality

time chatting (from a safe social distance, of course). We also sit down for a nice family dinner every night. Everything is less rushed, slow-paced, and quite simple. But it's pretty darn cool."

Shaffer has also found that her kids can manage without her micromanaging, they can do chores, devices are not evil and community is more important now than ever before. "People need people! And you can find community in many forms," she says. "My oldest kid has his virtual gaming community; my younger two live for FaceTime or Zoom calls. My husband and I need the live 'hello' from neighbors from a safe social distance, and we are also able to find community through social media. We will make it through as long as we have each other!"

-- J. Wake

Try these tangy, spicy sprouts with balsamic-Dijon-shallot reduction



Balsamic Brussels

Photo Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

A couple of years ago, we featured a cheesy Brussels sprouts recipe in this column, and for all of you Brussels sprouts lovers out there, here is another recipe, which is tangy, salty and a bit spicy all at the same time. I don't know about you, but once I became a Brussels sprouts

convert, (for years I wouldn't go near them), I've never looked back. They do have a very distinct aroma and whenever I smell them cooking at a nearby restaurant, it makes me want the have them. But, it's not a scent you want around all the time. For example, I once bought two orders of our favorite Brussels sprouts from a food stand

and these are absolutely delicious with the crunchy, browned edges of the sprouts tossed in a balsamic-Dijon-shallot reduction. The key is to let them brown for a few minutes undisturbed before finishing the cooking and making the sauce. That's the best way to get the beautiful crispy edges.

INGREDIENTS

4 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup walnut halves
1 large shallot, finely chopped
1 pound Brussels sprouts, cleaned and cut in half
2-4 tablespoons water
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon lemon pepper
1/4 teaspoon red pepper chili flakes
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon honey
1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Heat one tablespoon olive oil in a cast iron skillet or large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the walnuts and cook just until toasted, stirring occasionally. (Watch them closely so they don't burn.) Remove from pan and set aside. In the same pan, add remaining olive oil along with shallots and cook just until translucent. Add Brussels sprouts to pan, all with the cut side down. Cook uncovered and undisturbed over medium heat for about 3-4 minutes until the bottoms have all become golden brown. Add 3-4 tablespoons of water, cover pan, and allow to cook until al dente, or barely tender. Add a dash more water if the pan runs dry before they are tender. Remove sprouts from pan and set aside.

Add the Dijon, lemon pepper, garlic powder, honey and balsamic vinegar to the pan and cook until slightly thickened and reduced by about 1/3. Toss Brussels sprouts, walnuts and red pepper flakes into the pan and stir to coat with the balsamic reduction. Continue to cook just a couple more minutes or until heated through. Season to taste with salt and pepper.



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