

# HOPE AND HEALING

As we enter May, museum-goers\* are looking ahead to even more time at home, as well as mixed feelings about the reopening of our communities. There is a sense that many are reaching an emotional low point.

*“To be frank, I have lost quite a bit of my hope. I fear that we are at just the beginning of a long and painful pandemic.”*



Staying home is becoming harder. Yet many fear that officials are acting too hastily to reopen non-essential businesses. .... **They want normal back.**

*“I think that we are all hopeful that life will one day return to normal.”*

Whether it is the old normal or the new normal, they want a sense of normalcy. Living with uncertainty is hard.

**So we asked museum-goers how museums can help now and going forward.**

## Museums can bring HOPE.

The ways they suggested is reflected in recurring themes we have seen in this research during the pandemic:

### PANDEMIC CONTEXTUALIZATION

*“I think one thing museums could do would be to create a digital exhibit about how society has overcome crises and returned to normal in the past. Perhaps museums could tell stories of how life returned back to normal after the 1918 epidemic for example?”*

### CONNECTING US VIRTUALLY, ESPECIALLY TO THOSE WE LOVE BUT CANNOT SEE

*“... I live alone, and am really struggling with the loneliness. I think this is something a lot of people are feeling and something museums could help with. Offering virtual interactive activities we can do with the people we miss and want to spend time with would go a long way in creating hope and positivity during this time.”*

### HELP US BY FEELING LIKE WE ARE PART OF SOMETHING

*“I miss feeling like I am a part of something big and meaningful.”*

### AND JUST BY MUSEUMS BEING, WELL, MUSEUMS ... AND FULFILLING OUR MISSIONS. FOR MUSEUM-GOERS, WE HAVE ALWAYS PROVIDED HOPE.

*“As for museums, I think they can show hope by keeping on with the mission, sharing their struggles, and being proactive and aggressive in providing services to people.”*

## Museums can also help us HEAL.

*“It’s about being a critical institution in our communities. This goes for folks facing hardship, but also the general mental health of community. Knowing we have places like museums to maintain our sanity is comforting in itself.”*

**We are all grieving. And the challenges we are facing have marked all of us in ways both big and small, obvious and hidden.**

We all need respite and places that can heal us emotionally, mentally, and physically. Whether through giving us a sense of purpose, exploring what it means to be human, gaining knowledge, or allowing us to escape ... museum-goers believe museums play a key role here.

*“We should articulate the need for more local, state, and federal revenues to support museums as sites necessary for healing and essential for education.”*

**Many museum-goers also felt that essential workers, from medical personnel to sanitation workers, deserved special treatment from museums. They felt it was a small thing museums could do to provide extra healing and respite to those who have stepped up and helped others during this time.**

**We are, however, in a period of great uncertainty, and our communities face an uncertain future. If museums are going to be relevant, we need to provide hope and healing now ... so that we can be vital participants of the future.**

*“Don’t wait for this to be over to try to heal. If museums are not part of the hope and wait for the healing, they may not be as impactful.”*

*“I hope museums can contribute to us thriving in the new normal.”*

Museums and the Pandemic Data Stories are created by Wilkening Consulting on behalf of the American Alliance of Museums.

- Sources include:
- Spring 2020 Online Panel of Museum-Goers
  - Spring 2020 Broader Population Sampling
  - 2020 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers

\*Data Stories share research about both museum-goers (who visit multiple museums each year) and the broader population (including casual and non-visitors to museums).

The entire series of Museums and the Pandemic Data Stories can be found at [wilkeningconsulting.com/data-stories](http://wilkeningconsulting.com/data-stories).

