


# Substantial Disruption



## Lean On Each Other To Fight the Trump Virus

By Mike Tully

The Trump Virus brought tragedy, along with financial distress, mental and emotional challenges, and a few surprises. One surprise, at least to me, was writer's block. I try to update my blog at least twice a month, ideally weekly, usually focusing on politics. I'm a sports fan and politics is a lot like sports. But it's always fun until someone gets hurt. If an errant fastball leaves a batter lifeless on the grass, the stadium goes silent and nobody feels like calling balls and strikes. Whether it's on the diamond, the gridiron, or the hardwood, when a player is badly hurt the announcers say the same thing: there are more important things than sports. The scoreboard recedes as we focus on and pray for the victim.

That's how covid-19 affected me. I would write a few sentences, then wipe the screen blank. Over and over. I tried to be insightful, maybe humorous, hopefully useful, but anger and sadness got the best of me. It was appropriate and satisfying to write about Donald Trump's narcissism and incompetence until people started dying on account of them.

But fish gotta swim, birds gotta fly, and writers gotta write. When my late friend Emil Franzi would invite me back to his *Inside Track* radio show, I always said yes, telling him "I need to scratch my radio itch." I keep this blog because I need to scratch my writer's itch. I've published it for more than a decade, originally as a source of bullying prevention information, more recently for punditry. Writing about current events and, when possible, relating them to historical events, requires research, which I love. Research and writing are therapeutic, especially now that I'm mostly retired. I don't mind that not many of you visit the site – you know who you are and bless you! – it keeps me relatively sane. But my muse went AWOL.

An old law school pal I've known for more than four decades bailed me out. You've read about the so-called "Trump bump," a recent increase in the President's favorability. It's still under fifty percent, but the highest of his presidency and he's basking in it. The bump has two causes: there's always a "rally around the leader" reaction to a national crisis, thanks to the natural inclination of a nation to look to its leaders for safety. The other is that Trump has commandeered the daily coronavirus briefings [for his personal political benefit](#), blathering for two hours while posturing as a "wartime president." Trump praises himself more than he expresses sympathy for disease victims – narcissism promoted to sociopathy. Perhaps that's why his "bump" is paltry compared to presidents whose popularity soared to the 80s and 90s in times of crisis. But, given Trump's disastrous incompetence, even a minor increase was perplexing.

Then, my old law school pal, Jim Watts, who lives in Minnesota, put the bump in context and cured my writer's block by crafting a definition of "Trump bump" that is more relevant and accurate than a mosquito bite of a polling rise. Here is how Jim defines "Trump bump:"

*Trump Bump, n. 1. The increase in preventable deaths, permanent pulmonary impairment, unemployment, poverty, foreclosures, evictions, bankruptcies, business failures, divorces, etc., directly attributable to delay, denial, deliberate misinformation, incompetence, and malfeasance by President Donald J. Trump in failing to lead the nation's response to the novel coronavirus covid19. 2. An attempted deflection of responsibility by President Donald J. Trump for leading the nation's response to covid19 from himself onto others. 3. The surge of pleasure President Donald J. Trump experiences when millions of frightened people watch daily televised media events which he uses instead for self-promotion.*

Jim was okay with using his definition in *Substantial Disruption*, so there it is. He hit the right note: decrying the calamity of Trump's leadership with irony. Good old-fashioned satire. Our exchange reminded me of similar email exchanges immediately after 9-11, when I reached out to old friends and they did the same. Emil Franzi and I hadn't been in touch for a number of years, for example, but we forged a bond in the 9-11 backwash that lasted until he died. The days following the 9-11 terrorist attack were long and painful, but the fellowship that sprang from it became a healing balm. I think we're starting to reach out again.

Sadly, there's no healing from the top. Donald Trump cares more about [insulting governors](#), making [bogus accusations against hospitals](#), [spreading false information](#) and bragging about his poll numbers and [ratings](#) than showing even a wobble of human empathy. When the nation cries out for unity, he offers divisiveness. As the virus burns into the landscape and the death count rises, he preens like Nero. He's not worthy of the people he purports to lead.

But he is worthy of the label "Trump virus." The [Washington Post reports](#), "(T)he United States will likely go down as the country that was supposedly best prepared to fight a pandemic but ended up catastrophically overmatched by the novel coronavirus, sustaining heavier casualties than any other nation." The Post added: "*It did not have to happen this way.*"

These are dark times. There ain't no sunshine and [Bill Withers is gone](#). But he left us with [the words we need](#) when an enemy too tiny to see is strong enough to bring our world to its knees. In the absence of treatment, cure, and vaccine – not to mention presidential leadership – the only way to defeat the enemy is by leaning on each other.

*Lean on me, when you're not strong  
And I'll be your friend  
I'll help you carry on  
For it won't be long  
'Til I'm gonna need  
Somebody to lean on*