

Standing together by keeping distance

Dear citizens of Frankfurt (Oder),

We have not yet experienced a situation like the present one. Suddenly everything is different and there is no manual to open. No textbook that tells us what we have to do, when and how. I know: Many of you are insecure, many of you are also afraid.

I can understand that. And yet I appeal to you to take a deep breath. Remain calm and collected. There will be an "afterwards". There will be. At the latest then we all have to answer the question how we have behaved now and today. In crises the character of a person shows itself more clearly than ever. What do you decide on? Are you selfish and endangering others? Or do you act in solidarity, responsibility and prudence? I can tell you already today: you will be remembered afterwards.

For our entire society, it is essential that each and every one of us now act in the interests of all. The regulations and restrictions that have been adopted only provide the framework for this. There are no instructions for each individual step. What counts is common sense on everyone's part.

I know that the past few days feel like weeks for some of us.

Only a week has passed under restricted living conditions, let us be clear about that. And we should also realize that we're only at the beginning. Therefore, everyone should understand that there are still many questions that need to be answered. They will be found from hour to hour, from day to day, from week to week.

We still know far too little about COVID-19, but the knowledge is growing. According to current expert assessments, the picture for our city could - in the worst case - look like this: Of the nearly 60,000 people living in Frankfurt (Oder), about 12,000 will require medical treatment during the spread of the virus. About 420 of them will require intensive medical care, i.e. ventilation. If all options are used, our hospital has a maximum capacity of 29 ventilation stations. This already makes us one of the best-supplied cities. And yet, if the 420 emergencies occur simultaneously, 391 people could die, who could have survived if we had succeeded in slowing down the spread of the virus to such an extent that a sufficiently small number of people need to be treated in parallel. We must all understand that: The point is not to prevent just about any one of us from experiencing the virus. That will happen. And from what we currently know, one way or another, some 420 people will need intensive treatment. But it makes a huge difference whether it happens in a day, over a week or over weeks and months. Because only if we succeed in the latter together can we help everyone in the best possible way. This is a matter of life and death.

Most of us do not belong to the older population and have pre-existing conditions. If COVID-19 breaks out in them, their lives are generally not endangered. That's good. What is not good is that these people will spread the virus to others. Not when they get sick, but when they have it inside them. Whether you have it or not is something we don't usually know until five or seven days later. This creates chains of infection that ultimately end up being very dangerous for many people.

Unless, of course: we refrain from seeing others for a while. We keep at least 1.5 meters distance from each other. We strictly observe the issued regulations.

In this way, we can contain the spread of the virus, in some cases even interrupt it.

I am aware that the current restrictions place enormous burdens and even fears on many of us. I have the greatest respect for those who are now caring for children at home, working in health care facilities, supermarkets and many other vital areas to ensure that all of our lives can continue despite difficult circumstances. Please do not trample these efforts underfoot! Have respect for these people! In addition, show this by doing everything you can to make your contribution! Do not form groups unnecessarily. Do not hoard in the supermarket. Moreover, do not treat your fellow human beings in an uncomprehending and angry manner.

I know that there is great uncertainty about what else you can do under the given circumstances.

Hence my advice: A sunny weekend has been announced. If you feel like welcoming spring with a walk in the fresh air, then do so. The city is big enough for everyone. However, do it only together with your loved ones, with whom you have daily contact anyway. Stay away from others and give them a friendly smile instead. We all need that right now, don't we? My appeal to you: Be good to each other.

Yours

Rene Wilke