The background of the entire cover is a dense field of red, stylized coronavirus particles. These particles are spherical with numerous small, rounded protrusions (spikes) extending from their surfaces. They are scattered across the frame, with some appearing more prominent and in focus than others, creating a sense of depth and a clinical, urgent atmosphere.

# DIARY OF A **COVID-19** SURVIVOR

---

MY JOURNEY THROUGH INFECTION TO  
RECOVERY AND HAPPINESS

TIM PICCIRILLO

# **Diary of COVID-19 Survivor**

My Journey Through Infection To Recovery  
And Happiness

Tim Piccirillo

Copyright © 2020 MarketPitch LLC

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author.

# DISCLAIMER

*The content in this ebook is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding any medical condition.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 .....</b>	<b>4</b>
“The Virus”	
<b>CHAPTER 2 .....</b>	<b>7</b>
“First ER Visit”	
<b>CHAPTER 3 .....</b>	<b>10</b>
“Second ER Visit and Hospitalization”	
<b>CHAPTER 4 .....</b>	<b>13</b>
“Treatment”	
<b>CHAPTER 5 .....</b>	<b>17</b>
“Recovery”	
<b>CHAPTER 6 .....</b>	<b>22</b>
“The Future in a Post-COVID-19 World”	
<b>ABOUT TIM PICCIRILLO .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>FOLLOW TIM PICCIRILLO ON SOCIAL MEDIA .....</b>	<b>28</b>

# INTRODUCTION



As I write this, there is currently a surge in COVID-19 cases in more than half the states in the US. Healthcare professionals and researchers are trying to get a handle on the behavior of this “superbug” while at the same time exploring and testing treatment options for it. At this time, there are also several human trials being conducted for vaccines that look promising.

Currently, doctors seem to be attempting to treat the symptoms of the virus so that the body can kill the virus on its own. Although you’ve seen them before, these symptoms can include\*:

---

\*Symptoms taken from the website of the Center for Disease Control ([www.cdc.org](http://www.cdc.org))

- fever or chills
- cough
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.
- fatigue
- muscle or body aches
- headache
- loss of taste or smell
- sore throat
- congestion or runny nose
- nausea or vomiting
- diarrhea

You should seek emergency medical attention if you have:

- trouble breathing.
- persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- new confusion
- inability to wake or stay awake
- bluish lips or face

I've purposely written this ebook in a diary-type of format to give readers a day-to-day account of what it's like to have this virus as well as the progression of it. I'll also be offering insight into, not only what it's like to be infected, but also the treatment given by the frontline doctors and nurses who are putting their lives on the line every day to save people like me from dying of this.

As I've told people ( thus the disclaimer)—and continue to tell them—I'm not a doctor or healthcare professional in any way. I only offer my thoughts and my take on my experience with contracting and recovering from the Coronavirus. The information offered in this ebook is taken from my observation of my treatment, as well as discussions with my healthcare providers which includes my doctors, nurses and after-care professionals.

At the present time, healthcare providers are stymied by the behavior of COVID-19, a respiratory SARS-type of virus. It's frustrating doctors as it presents differently in each person. Some only have mild symptoms and can recover at home, while others escalate quickly as the virus attacks the lungs and affects their breathing. One of the things that is truly confounding researchers currently is that 20%-40% of people who contract the virus are asymptomatic with some never getting sick. They can't figure out why a virus this powerful makes some so sick while others never develop symptoms.

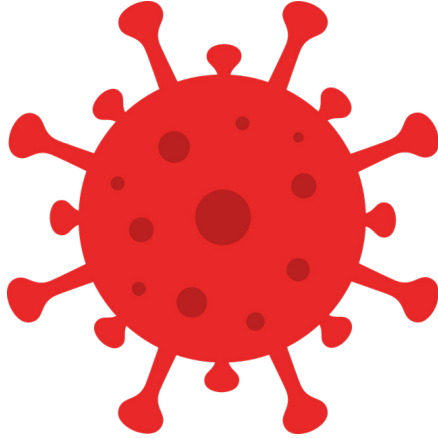
I've seen the implications of this virus from all sides since I contracted it and will offer some personal insights gleaned from my body being devastated by this disease and from the people who got me well.

This ebook won't be a political statement at all. I have purposely avoided this in writing what you're about to read. There are conspiracy theories, debates about the effectiveness of masks and social distancing, and questions about our basic rights being eroded due to the lockdowns imposed. This is not the point of this ebook.

I'm only attempting to put a "face" on COVID-19, educate people about the seriousness of the virus and hopefully, create awareness for protecting yourself. If we can all do this, by taking simple precautionary measures, it may help to flatten the curve and get this thing behind us. If we don't, the virus may continue to surge and run rampant as it is right now.



# CHAPTER 1



## “THE VIRUS”

I remember it vividly. It was June 8th and I woke up with a fever, throbbing headache and a fatigue that I’ve never experienced to that degree before.

I wasn’t sure what was going on. Because of the constant media coverage I immediately thought, “Is this what COVID-19 feels like”? I initially dismissed this notion because I knew it was a respiratory virus and that it normally starts with a sore throat and then moves to the lungs. Although I had a slight cough from some sinus drainage that I was having, I had neither a sore throat nor congestion in my lungs so I put having COVID out of my mind temporarily.

The second day the headache was gone. I felt like this was a little bit of good news but the fever persisted and

continued to come and go. To deal with the fever cycle, I developed a routine to take care of it. I didn't have a thermometer in the house (typical bachelor), so I could only judge the fever on how I felt at any given time. It was pretty obvious to me when I had a fever, as I know my body very well.

When this would occur, I would simply take 2 Tylenol tablets, as recommended by the CDC, to break the fever. After taking the tabs, I would normally sleep for an hour to ninety minutes then wake up soaking wet because the fever broke. It would always come back at some point through the duration of my illness.

For the next several days I debated in my head about whether I had COVID-19 or not. But 5 days into my illness, I wasn't getting better. I was drinking a lot of water mixed with PowerAde, under my doctor's direction, so that I would at least have some electrolytes to give me a bit of energy. I was dehydrated and my mouth was continually dry. I drank a ton of this as well as water the first week.

After a week of this I truly didn't think I had the Coronavirus. I still wasn't having breathing difficulty or a sore throat. I was under the impression that these symptoms had to be present in order to have COVID-19. I was wrong.

As this pandemic goes on—and currently raging at it's highest level yet, at the time of this writing—I found that this presents differently in people. When I had my first trip to the emergency room, the doctor asked me if I had any stomach pain, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. I had none of these symptoms but many people diagnosed with COVID-19 did.

It's now known that the virus is causing neurological

problems as well including brain fog, loss of taste and smell and other symptoms. Doctors are having trouble tracking the virus' behavior because it shows up differently in people, and causes different problems and symptoms depending on whether the person had underlying conditions or not.

I'm one of those people who thought I didn't have any underlying conditions. In the next chapter, I'll explain the big surprise I got when I was hospitalized with COVID-19.

## CHAPTER 2



### “FIRST ER VISIT”

After exhibiting symptoms that wouldn't go away, including extreme fatigue, fever and body aches, the virus finally took its toll 8 days after I first saw symptoms. I was overwhelmed, extremely sick and unable to take care of myself anymore.

Since I live alone, I called 911 and the ambulance arrived about 8 minutes later. The paramedics were very nice and friendly and when I told them I suspected I had COVID-19, they immediately (on my front porch before entering my house) put on personal protective equipment (PPE) in the event I was infected. This scene was almost surreal to me. I had seen movies like “Outbreak” and “Contagion” but this was real and it was happening to me! The paramedics came in with full PPE

that included a full body disposable suit, surgical gloves and mask. The paramedic who initially took care of me had what appeared to be a full-fledged gas mask on. He obviously wasn't taking any chances!

There are several major hospitals in the immediate area and the one I wanted to be taken to was "diverting" at the time. This is a term used when the emergency room or beds are temporarily full. I found out later that a fresh surge of the virus in the area was occurring in my county in Florida at the peak of my illness.

My next choice was a hospital I had been to before, Northside Hospital, so I knew I would be in good hands. When we pulled up to the ER entrance there were actually people on gurneys outside waiting to get into the ER. I had to wait 45 minutes in the ambulance before they took me in.

Once there, the staff went to work. They did the usual tests: blood work, chest x-ray, ECG, influenza test and, of course the COVID-19 test, which would take 2 days to get results.

Everything came up normal. But I felt anything but "normal". I had a suspicion that I was COVID positive but wouldn't know until the test results came back. I had all the classic symptoms, aside from breathing problems.

Since this is a SARS-type of virus, meaning it's respiratory, the virus normally attacks the lungs quickly. I had no trouble breathing but, as stated in the previous chapter, had a dry cough due to some sinus drainage that occurred at the outset of my sickness.

The attending physician in the ER said that they could keep me in the hospital but that I'd be more

comfortable recovering at home. She made the standard recommendations of the importance of staying hydrated, taking Tylenol to combat the fever and lots of rest. She also pointed out that if my breathing became labored or my symptoms worsened to come back and they would take care of me.

I'm inquisitive by nature. Throughout this whole process starting with my first visit to the ER, I would ask questions from the paramedics, my doctors and every attending nurse I had. I wanted to know what they knew about this thing. I found out that the healthcare workers were truly "winging" it and doing the best they could in dealing with a virus researchers and doctors still know very little about. This bug appears to be chameleon-like in the way it presents in people, the duration of sickness, severity of the illness, recovery time and even basic symptoms.

I took an Uber home and I thought I may be ok now. I wasn't prepared for the reality of what having this thing is really like but I was about to find out just two days later....

## CHAPTER 3



### “SECOND ER VISIT AND HOSPITALIZATION”

Two days after my first ER visit I looked at my COVID test results through an online patient portal set up for me. I remember the image of the test on the form: Result: *Positive A. Range: Abnormal.*

Strangely, I wasn't surprised. As I said in the last chapter, I suspected that I was COVID positive and I was right. I thought that, although I felt deathly ill, at least I could breathe, so the virus hadn't progressed to that point yet.

It was only a couple of hours later that I felt an unusual heaviness in my chest. Now, this scared me. I tried to keep calm but then it worsened and I could tell something was definitely wrong and that the virus had finally attacked my lungs. The fatigue was becoming unbearable and I could no longer take care of myself so I called 911 again.

This visit by the paramedics was a complete 180 degree turn from the first trip to the ER. I announced as they knocked on the door that I was COVID positive. They then went through the same protocol of putting on PPE. When they came in the paramedic was a bit confrontational and, even though I was COVID positive, stated that another hospital was diverting and that Northside was pretty busy too. I stated as strongly as I was able at the time, to take me to Northside as they told me to come back if I worsened. And I was definitely worse!

I was very put off this time as the paramedics seemed to make me prove that I was too sick to take care of myself. I now understand why they gave me pushback. Another surge had begun in the state and they had to make sure the sickest were taken care of. I convinced them that the doctor at Northside told me to come back if my symptoms worsened. They took me to Northside but there was no waiting this time. I was taken right into the ER and they started the same round of tests, including blood work and chest x-ray. They now knew I was COVID positive. The x-ray showed I also had pneumonia in my lungs. It wasn't severe at this point, but it was starting.

Because of the pneumonia, along with the COVID positive diagnosis, I was admitted to the hospital. I slept in the ER until about 3:30am when they took me to my room on the COVID unit of the hospital. When I got there,



it looked like a scene out of the movie “Outbreak”, with staff wearing masks and full PPE as they entered patient rooms.

The protocol for the nursing staff is to put on a full plastic, disposable body apron, surgical gloves, a face mask and plastic face-shield. They then dispose of the gloves and apron in a biohazard waste container *every time* they come into and leave a patient’s room.

The bed I was placed in was an air mattress that would produce a sound like a giant fan every 15 or so minutes. This was a great thing as the bed would adjust to your body’s contour and prevented bed sores. I was very comfortable being there but the worst was yet to come....

## CHAPTER 4



### “TREATMENT”

Although I was admitted to the hospital and felt a little more comfortable knowing I would be taken care of, I also knew that the doctors were winging it as they went along, with each patient presenting symptoms of the virus differently. There is no cure for this and the doctors do the best they can to treat symptoms, so that hopefully the body can rid itself of the bug.

The next day in the late morning, my breathing became even more labored. I could feel the pneumonia was worsening. I was still getting a fever off and on and they would give me acetaminophen (Tylenol) to break it.

They also gave me a saline drip to keep me hydrated due to the fever dehydrating me significantly.

I not only had a hospitalist overseeing my treatment but he worked closely with a pulmonologist who was trying to treat the pneumonia. In the ER they had given me 2 erythromycin tablets, which is a standard treatment right now with COVID-19. They also gave me another powerful antibiotic at the same time in an IV.

A friend of mine who's originally from the UK, sent me a message with an article about a drug that was helping his friends and saving lives in England. It's a corticosteroid called Dexamethasone. The article stated it's a widely-available and cheap drug that has proven benefits in the fight against COVID-19.

When he found out my breathing was getting more difficult, my pulmonologist prescribed Dexamethasone and gave it to me through an IV. He had told me I would breathe easier with it.

The drug is prescribed for a number of things, including pneumonia. Coronavirus triggers inflammation in the body as the body tries to fight the virus. The body's immune system can go into overdrive and instead of attacking the infection, it attacks it's own cells, which many times proves fatal. Dexamethasone tamps down the immune system so this doesn't occur.

I was very tired and weak and, because I have Tourettes Syndrome (TS), I don't react well to the stimulant effects of steroids. This drug didn't stimulate me, however, and I promptly took a 2-hour nap. When I woke up, I could breathe noticeably easier. The downside to this drug was it had the side effect of spiking blood sugar levels. My glucose more than doubled after the

injection. To counteract this, and to prevent diabetes, they injected me with insulin. Now this stimulated me—for several hours. I found out that treating the symptoms was also a balancing act. My doctors needed to offset the side effects of the Dexamethasone that caused my blood sugar and blood pressure to spike.

I had to have an additional insulin injection the next day also and they balanced the elevated blood pressure by giving me an additional dose of my blood pressure medication in the late afternoon.

### Underlying Conditions

You've probably heard that people who have the most severe cases of COVID-19 have underlying conditions, thus making them more susceptible to the virus and its effects. These can include anything from high blood pressure, obesity, immunodeficiency due to a medical condition or conditions involving other organs in the body.

I eat a pretty healthy diet, workout and do cardio. I *thought* I was in fairly good shape. As I stated before, I do have high blood pressure that runs in the low/high range. It's just high enough to need a very low dose of BP medication. This is a genetic thing that runs on both sides of my family with both grandfather's as well as my own father being affected by it.

What I didn't know was that I had chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). I had smoked for over 20 years but had quit 15 years ago. It was a surprise to me and my primary care physician when she heard of this but my chest x-ray in the hospital showed it. The good news is that it seems that I'm in the early stages of it. This, I'm figuring, is why the virus didn't attack my lungs

immediately. My lungs were weakened for sure, but my body managed to stave off the pneumonia for a week and a half after I contracted COVID.

The lesson learned is that some people (like me) don't even know they have underlying conditions and this could be dangerous if they contract the virus.

# CHAPTER 5



## **“RECOVERY”**

With other illnesses I’ve had, whether it be the flu, a respiratory virus, bronchitis or other bacterial or viral infection, my recovery time was always fairly rapid. I would be sick a few days or even a week or two only to bounce back within a few days of feeling better. Not this time.

At the age of 60, my recovery would be much slower, with good days and bad days. My doctor had told me before discharge that I could expect this to take at least two months since the onset of symptoms to recover. Since then, I have seen and read stories of COVID survivors who continue to have difficulties with fatigue, brain

fog and other residual effects of the virus months after contracting it.

So far, I haven't noticed any neurological problems. Many people experience losing their taste and smell as well as brain fog from the virus. Despite having Tourette's Syndrome, which is a neurological condition, the virus does not appear to have affected my central nervous system in a negative way.

My discharge instructions were to go on a diabetic diet as I weaned off an oral dose of the Dexamethasone. This made sense to me, since the steroid spiked my blood sugar, and I was good about watching what I ate in this regard. Another positive side effect of the Dexamethasone was that it increased my appetite. I had eaten very well in the hospital (and the food at Northside was impeccable!) and my appetite continued to be good, which helped keep my strength up.

But then there is the fatigue. This was one of the main symptoms I experienced with COVID-19. And during my recovery thus far, it's still rearing its ugly head, although not as intensely. They have discovered that some patients (mostly people who got a severe case of the virus) experience what is called "post-COVID syndrome." Symptoms like continued fatigue, loss of taste and smell, heart palpitations, chest pain, shortness of breathe and cognitive difficulties can last for months. It's still unknown if these symptoms resolve or if the virus causes permanent damage. I have good days and bad days. My sleep is fairly consistent, which helps, but I still tire very easily—even from talking on the phone or texting someone. I consider myself fortunate though, as some survivors are experiencing heart difficulties and

some who were on ventilators experience lung problems like fibrosis or scarring of the lungs.

I have suffered from chronic fatigue in the past. Typically, it would come in spurts and then vanish for months or years, without explanation. I'm now experiencing this again. It has yet to be determined whether this will be an ongoing problem or if I can heal from it.

For the record, I'm a guy that will do anything and everything to heal from illness, trauma or anything else that negatively impacts my health. I've tried many alternative healing methods to treat my TS, anxiety and depression, as well as chronic fatigue and other "mystery illnesses." Some of these include acupuncture, reflexology and herbal remedies. I use a chiropractor on a regular basis and it's proven to be one of the most effective methods to keep my TS under control. Some healthcare professionals use the term "mystery illness" when they can't find out what exactly is happening in a patient's body with a variety of symptoms being present. Many times it's difficult for doctors to figure out the cause—and how to treat—chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia and other maladies with no definitive cause that seem to come out of nowhere.

It remains to be seen what, if any, long-term residual effects I'll have as the result of the virus. I'm a "glass half-full" kind of guy, so I tend to err on the side of having the expectation of not being impacted negatively in the future once I fully recover. If I do have residual chronic fatigue or other issues, I'll deal with them as they arise and research every form of treatment available, including non-traditional remedies.



One thing that is crucial in my recovery is staying connected with people. This is where social media has been a real life-saver for me. I make my living primarily as a digital marketing consultant and copywriter ([www.TimPiccirillo.com](http://www.TimPiccirillo.com)) and have a love/hate relationship with all social media platforms for various reasons. However, Facebook alone—and my friends on there—has been instrumental in my getting well again. The love, encouragement and overall support I've gotten from people has made a huge difference in both my mood and my overall health through this. I recognize that “no man is an island” and I can't get through life or COVID-19 without my friends who continually check on me and offer their support. This has been just as valuable as any other after-care treatment I've received.

People ask me how I have stayed so positive throughout this whole thing. Actually, I have cultivated an attitude of healing that I trained my mind on long ago. My mental health and thinking about healing was instrumental in overcoming this thing. The fact that I could die only occurred to me once throughout this saga and surprisingly, I was at peace with my fate. I knew I had virtually no control over the virus. What I did have was control over my reaction to it.

As I continue to recover, I'm in a very grateful state of mind and happy. Yes, happy. I feel like I cheated death. Somehow, the virus didn't kill me and it definitely could have without the intervention I had in the hospital. Although I'm a fairly happy guy and positive the majority of the time, I had lost this throughout my illness. But I got it back—and in abundance. I have a new perspective on life and what I do in my work, in my relationships and everything else in my life.

Today I take nothing for granted and realized life is truly fragile. I have nothing but gratitude for *every day* now.

## CHAPTER 6



### **“THE FUTURE IN A POST-COVID-19 WORLD”**

There are a lot of issues currently being debated on news outlets and social media platforms regarding the impact of COVID-19. The virus itself is just one of many topics being discussed. Researchers are still trying to figure out the behavior of the virus, how to treat it, and how to stop it.

In the meantime, the economy has been severely affected with record-high unemployment, businesses shutting down for good and people not being able to pay their bills. The financial strain on families is sometimes overwhelming with parents having to resort to food banks and other means to feed themselves and their

children. The pandemic has shown just how many people have been living paycheck to paycheck with little, if any, savings to assist in a crisis like this.

Because this has occurred in an election year, politicizing the pandemic has become somewhat of a national pastime, particularly on social media, with finger-pointing being rampant. My opinion is that this is inevitable when something of this magnitude occurs—election year or not. However, no one saw this coming and we're dealing with an invisible entity called COVID-19 that has stymied the best infectious disease specialists in the world. It's easy to point fingers at what should or shouldn't be done.

People are definitely on edge from, at this point, 4 months of quarantine and isolation. The uncertainty of the pandemic, when it will end and fear of getting the virus, has already taken a toll on people's mental health, marriages and relationships. Issues like job loss, bankruptcy, home foreclosures and social isolation have pushed many people to the brink. Suicide rates have risen substantially as the stress of the pandemic has affected people's ability to cope effectively. This is especially true in populations who are predisposed to mental health problems, substance abuse and the most vulnerable in our society.

Because of many businesses now having employees working from home, the way we work has been changed forever. Many companies that sent employees home to work plan on letting them continue to work from home even after the pandemic is over. These businesses are finding employees have less distractions and higher productivity when at home. This is counterintuitive to what many thought would happen when people work

remotely.

This has also caused “the gig economy” to be fast-tracked. Currently, about 1/4 of the workforce in the US are freelancers—which include people who freelance on the side. Before the pandemic, businesses were finding that hiring freelancers to do jobs that are highly specialized (e.g. copywriting or graphic design) as opposed to paying a full-time employee was not only cost-saving but the business owner could get very high-quality work from experts all over the world. It was expected the majority of the workforce in the US would be freelancers within 5-10 years. This has probably been accelerated because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

No one really knows what the “new normal” will look like in a post-COVID world. There is much speculation about this and how long the pandemic will last before researchers either find a vaccination or cure—or at least figure out how to lessen the severity of the illness once you contract the bug.

On a personal note, I saw that most countries were woefully unprepared for a global pandemic, with shortages of masks, ventilators and other PPE at the outset making this glaringly obvious. Add to this, the behavior of the virus seems to change\* and doctor’s continue to treat people on a case-by-case basis, with no standard treatment protocol due to people presenting symptoms and severity differently.

---

\*As this is being written, it’s been reported that virus has mutated where it’s even more easily transmitted yet doesn’t seem to have strengthened to make people sicker.

The uncertainty of the pandemic, the necessity to quarantine and what it means for the economy in the US—and globally—as well as the impact it's having on people's psyches and relationships is causing a number of negatives to come out of this. Fear, anger and futility are all emotions that are common now as people's stress levels are frayed at best and at the breaking point, at worst.

My take? I'm simply grateful and happy to be alive. I had good doctors and nurses who knew what to do with my particular case to get me well again. I realize I could have died from this. I'm one of the lucky ones. I don't know what the future will bring for me or others. I know it's all "gravy" for me from here. Meaning, the little petty annoyances don't really matter to me anymore. When you have a life-threatening illness that doctors don't understand or really know how to treat—let alone cure—it gives you a different perspective on virtually everything.

Humans have this great capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. I have positive expectations and hope for the future—whatever that may look like.

# ABOUT TIM PICCIRILLO...



Tim Piccirillo was born with Tourette's Syndrome, a debilitating neurological disorder which causes sudden, jerky movements of his limbs, facial tics and other co-occurring problems. Despite this, Tim became the director of a disability organization by the age of 29 and shortly after, left the field for a career in show business. He became a successful entertainer as a comedy magician, performing at comedy clubs, corporate events, cruise ships, fairs and festivals, as well as private parties and as the opening act for many stars and celebrities. At the same time, he built from scratch, a thriving entertainment talent agency and became one of the premiere bookers of comedians in Pennsylvania during the comedy boom of the early 90's.

As a student of personal development, Tim put some core success principles into his life and found they worked so well that he entered the speaking industry as a

motivational speaker in the mid-90's to show others the way to peak performance. Currently Tim still speaks and performs, as well as consults with businesses of all sizes on growing their business through the power of online marketing, as well as improving the customer experience and accommodating employees who are recovering from COVID-19. Tim's website is [www.TimPiccirillo.com](http://www.TimPiccirillo.com) and his email is [tim@timpic.com](mailto:tim@timpic.com).



# FOLLOW TIM PICCIRILLO ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TimPicci/>



LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/tim-piccirillo/>



Instagram: [#timpitch](#)



Twitter: [@TimPiccirillo](#)