

COVID-19: New Routines After Lockdown

We don't know what new measures a total lifting of lockdown may bring – but we can anticipate that things may not necessarily go back to exactly how they were before. Many of us may feel that we have settled in to a 'new normal' at this stage of lockdown. We may feel that whilst there are negatives to the situation and obstacles which we may have faced during the pandemic; the lockdown has given many of us the opportunity to reflect on our lives, make positive changes to our wellbeing, make extra effort to connect with loved ones and show acts of kindness within our local communities. We may have drawn many positives from our time spent in lockdown and may feel that we would like to incorporate these positives, and any lessons learnt during lockdown into our routines when the restrictions have been lifted. Equally, some of us may not have made many changes yet, but may be considering doing things differently after lockdown. Below are some useful tips on how we may consider incorporating some of these changes -

Healthy Diet & Hydration –

If you have made positive changes to your diet, levels of nutrition and keeping hydrated during the lockdown period, it is important to try and continue this post lockdown and try to incorporate these changes in to your daily routine.

- Plan weekly meals and pre-prepare meals where possible.
- Introduce bulk cooking once or twice a week if you have a busy schedule.
- Invest in a water bottle that tracks your intake throughout the day. The NHS advises we should drink about 1.2 litres (six to eight glasses) of fluid every day to stop us getting dehydrated.
- Stock up on plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables to snack on when you are back 'on the go'.
- Get the family involved in cooking or food preparation if this is something you have enjoyed doing together during lockdown.

Exercise –

With social interaction and our everyday movements being restricted; many individuals have introduced more exercise in to their routines from home. Whilst it may not be possible to exercise as much or as often as you have been during lockdown with the daily and now unlimited allowance of keep fit time each day, try and work this into your daily or weekly routine where possible –

- Consider joining a gym or health club with flexible hours for you to attend around your schedule.
- Set your alarm an hour earlier in the morning where possible to go out for a walk or do an online fitness class.
- Taking up a new sport where people meet regularly to train together.
- Access short online workouts – these are available from 5 - 15 minute sessions which might be easier to work in to a busy schedule.
- Walk or cycle to work where possible.
- If you find that exercise can't be worked into your working week easily after lockdown, consider setting some time aside at the weekend and make it something fun that you enjoy doing – you could even get the family involved too!

Family Time –

For many of us, the lockdown has meant having a lot of extra time spent together as a family in the same household. Whilst some may have found this challenging at times, we may have also found this extra time spent as a family unit valuable and would like to incorporate more of this into our usual routines after lockdown -

- Set aside 30 minutes or an hour in the evening for quality time with young children – they will have been used to having a lot of extra time with you, which you and they may miss after lockdown.
- Work in a family fun night into your routine once a week or every couple of weeks; e.g. game night, movie night, quiz night etc.
- Try and eat your evening meals together – this gives you all the opportunity to talk about your best and worst parts of your day.
- Ask each other what you have all liked about having extra time together as a family and draw from some of these positives to incorporate into your new routines after lockdown.

Communication -

During the pandemic you may have had the opportunity to reflect on the way you communicate with others now vs before COVID-19. Perhaps you have found new ways of communicating that you would like to incorporate into your new routine after lockdown –

- More effective communication at work amongst teams via regular or daily video calls.
- Delivering Webinars or Video Conferencing
- Communicating more over the telephone or using video calls rather than being reliant on messaging or emails.
- Making more effort to connect with family and friends – this doesn't have to stop once the lockdown is lifted; you may still choose to keep family quiz nights or group video calls going with friends to keep connected with each other, you may decide to make these more infrequent e.g. once a month instead of weekly.

Self-Care –

Lockdown may have allowed you to have more time to focus on yourself and to consider what matters most to you, ensure to incorporate these positives into your new routines post-lockdown. Still make time for “you”, whether that be a new hobby you have taken up, a healthy diet and exercise or just a bit of relaxation – this will all help to improve your overall wellbeing.

How to make it possible?

It might feel difficult or overwhelming to try and think about how to incorporate many of these factors into our 'old normal', many of us may have hectic lives and busy routines usually, and to add more to it might feel unrealistic. It is important to recognise that these have not been 'normal' circumstances and during lockdown many of us have had extra time on our hands; time that has allowed us to introduce new things into our lives, time to reflect and have quality time with our families at home.

Realistically, we are not going to be able to 'do it all', but try to consider what the key positives are that you'll be taking from your time spent in lockdown and what is most important for you. Write down what a 'normal' week looked like for you before lockdown and look at where there may be gaps, or things you used to do that you would now like to replace with something that is more meaningful to you now. And remember – be realistic – you don't have to work everything in to every day or week in the way you are able to now, but even if you are able to incorporate things on a monthly basis you may feel more positive for doing so.

Sometimes having a visual to refer to, or a plan in place for what a change could or may look like for us, can help us feel more in control of the situation when the time comes for lockdown to be lifted further.

If you feel you may need some support, you can also contact Care first. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.

If you would like to view the Webinar on 'New Routines After Lockdown' this is being delivered live on Wednesday 27th May at 12pm-12.30pm, please use the below link to register for this session -

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8314914155597848590>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.