



Living in lockdown

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Infinite uncertainty

Everyone is living with a seemingly infinite degree of uncertainty right now and whilst we navigate unfamiliar territory such as home working and home schooling, many of us feel way out of our comfort zones. It is no wonder that many of us find ourselves overreacting because we feel stressed.

Being human

It is natural to feel overwhelmed when our lives have literally changed overnight – it's not surprising that we may be struggling with our mood and sense of wellbeing.

Being human means that we assume our 'tomorrow' will be a similar version of 'today', until that is, a global pandemic breaks out. Our need for familiarity and security has been threatened and our lives as we knew them have evaporated. Our 'tomorrow' has begun to play out like a sci-fi horror movie – welcome to our new world of living in lockdown!

Living in lockdown

Living in lockdown has forced us to acknowledge many things we may have previously avoided or put off, from menial household chores to the more shocking revelation that each of us are far more vulnerable than we would ever had imagined.

The world is in survival mode and some are struggling to meet even their most basic needs such as food and shelter. Even if we are fortunate enough to have enough food on our table, many of us are struggling to adapt to this new way of living and working.

Self-awareness and resilience

Have you ever stopped working at the end of the day and not been able to remember what you have achieved?

Has anyone asked you recently what you are looking forward to and nothing springs to mind?

These are all signs that we are going through the motions on autopilot and on a downhill trajectory in terms of well-being.

We are hardwired to look for threats and tend to focus on our weaknesses, especially when we are in 'fight' or 'flight' mode. Stress affects our ability to think clearly and respond rationally – we may overreact, ruminate on negative thoughts and end up focussing on the 'lack' rather than the possibilities.

Resilient people are adept at selecting where they focus their time and attention. The good news is that we can learn to become more resilient – we simply need to practice what to focus our attention on.

Practical steps to boosting mood

We may not know exactly what the future holds, however, we can take practical steps today to boost our mood and help ourselves adapt. Now is the time to master our minds and build our levels of self-awareness and resilience so that we can function and feel better.

One of the practical exercises I use with individuals, and teams, is a reflective practice called the Mindset Check. Putting onto paper what is occupying your mind can not only be therapeutic and distil the things that concern you most, but by 'downloading' your thoughts you make space for ideas and solutions to appear.

The Mind Check exercise can be done daily or weekly, alone or with colleagues, friends or family. The exercise helps you to identify:

- **Which activities help you feel good**
- **What depletes your energy**
- **What you would like to do more (and less) of**

By making a note of the activities, interactions and experiences that elicit pleasure and positive emotions, you will develop a greater awareness about what you need to focus on more, and conversely what you need to do less of!



Through greater awareness, you can consciously change your behaviour and by doing so improve the way you feel. The key to this practice is to make time to pause and reflect on a regular basis until you start to see your unique patterns emerging.

[Download the Mindset check.](#)

Summary

We are human and it is natural to feel fearful in extreme uncertainty, however how we respond is down to us.

I will leave you to consider this question: What is the one thing you will take away from reading this that will help you boost your mood and build your resilience?

Reflective practice

These questions support individual or team reflective practice and can be done daily, weekly or monthly. By noting the activities, interactions and experiences that elicit positive or negative emotions we develop greater awareness about what drives us, brings us greatest fulfilment and energises us. Through awareness, we can then consciously choose to focus on what nourishes us and at the same time be more mindful about detaching from things that deplete us.

The key is to make time to reflect on a regular basis – you may choose to do this on your own or with colleagues or member of your family. It is important that you begin with 1. ‘Nourishers’ and end with 3. ‘Looking forward to’.

1. Nourishers

Note any activities, experiences, interactions that have elicited positive emotions e.g. feeling energised, inspired, grateful, excited, content, upbeat, calm, fulfilled, positive, satisfied, optimistic, confident, joyful, proud.

Work	Personal

2. Drainers

Note any activities, experiences, interactions that have provoked a negative response e.g. anxiety, tiredness, lethargy, fear, boredom, panic, dread, uncertainty, shock, distress, helplessness, sadness disappointment, irritation, anger, annoyance, intimidation, resentment, guilt, shame, hurt, exasperation, confusion.

Work	Personal

3. Looking forward to

Think about what’s coming up that you are looking forward to – things that evoke feelings of excitement, contentment, positivity, hope, interest, enthusiasm, intrigue, peace, eagerness, curiosity.

Work	Personal