

Last March we had to adjust to a wholly different way of living. Now as restrictions are beginning to ease, we are having to rally ourselves to face new challenges. It is understandable that many of us will be filled with anxious questions: will I cope? Will I be safe? Will I be able to pick up the pieces from where I left off? This is a normal response and it is important we look after our wellbeing as we negotiate the path back to a more fulfilling life. Here are some simple ways to help you along this path:

Do what feels right for you

Try not to be pressurised into doing things or being in situations just to please others. Stick to what feels innately right for you. Taking charge of what feels right for you will help you to feel more in control.

Keep realistic perspectives

Familiarise yourself with the latest information and safety guidelines from trusted sources. We live in the world of social media, which can sometimes cause us to catastrophise and lose perspective. Don't waste energy on the 'what ifs'. Better to take the 'what's most likely to happen' approach.

Look after yourself

If we feel tired, under-nourished and stressed, our anxiety levels are likely to increase. Try to eat nutritionally, don't overindulge in alcohol, try to maintain a healthy exercise and sleep routine as well as a good work/life balance.

Stay connected

Isolating ourselves from others isn't helpful. We are social beings, so try to maintain social contact either remotely or in person according to the current safety guidelines.

If you find yourself slipping into unhelpful ways of thinking, such as always anticipating the worst and feeling low and depressed, overly irritable and making mountains out of molehills, try to share your feelings before they become overwhelming. Sharing feelings helps to diffuse them.

Coping *after* covid

Psychotherapist Liane Oldham discusses how best to safeguard your mental health and wellbeing as we come out of lockdown

WORDS: Julie Lucas



ABOVE: Post covid, try to live life in the present rather than worrying about 'what ifs'

Stay in the present

This last year has shown us that we really can't forecast anything. Try to stay in the present rather than worrying about what may or may not happen in the future. Doing this will help you to feel more in control.

Be prepared

There is still much uncertainty around us at the moment so the more you can prepare the better. If you know you have to go to back to work, to the shops, etc, then make sure you have all the information and everything you will need beforehand.

Be understanding

Not everyone will feel the same way at this time. Some will be grieving, while others will be eager to re-engage; try to be as

understanding and helpful as you feel you can. Helping others will also help you to feel better about yourself.

Do things you enjoy

Take time to de-stress and enjoy yourself. Whether it be a relaxation activity such as yoga, Pilates or a simple dog walk. Try to get out into the fresh air at least once a day. Maintain any new activities you discovered during out at-home period; if you adopted the 'hour a day' outside exercise approach and it made you feel good, keep going.

Above all, whatever you choose to do, do at a pace that suits you. Create your own boundaries. ♦

Liane Oldham runs online counselling sessions.
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