

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED & UNLEARNED DURING LOCKDOWN

A therapeutic perspective:

These last few weeks have been eye-opening for us in both our personal and professional lives. We have learned much about ourselves and about the strength of others at this time.

Here are some life-changing lessons that we hope will stay with us for years to come:

We have realized the value and beauty in sadness. Sadness is real and one of the truest emotions to feel. It humbles you and connects you to yourself in a way that happiness doesn't do.

Loneliness is difficult. It's raw, devastating and painful. But it's a reality for so many who are now living and conquering it. They are not allowing themselves to be swallowed up by it but are rather using it as an opportunity for growth. Even as we braced ourselves for the loneliness of working remotely, we learned that it is not as daunting as we thought it would be.

Reality is hard to accept sometimes. And that's ok. It's ok to get caught up in the anxiety of lockdown. The strength is in not staying there.

How we deal with anxiety has been very enlightening. Many have realized that there's more than one way to deal with anxiety and that different people deal with it in different ways.

In fact, the way each individual handles anxiety can change constantly, depending on what we're thinking about at any given moment, so just go with it.

How we deal with worry about the future is educational too. It also changes from minute to minute - one moment thinking we're ok and the next feeling total despair about what's to come.

We have learned that we have very little control. What we thought was a sense of control over our lives was really just a sense of routine leading to a false sense of security. All we can do is try to add some order to the disorder by having a routine.

This helped us learn to surrender, which brings with it a new sense of freedom. And yet we've learned that there is some value in planning and creating a schedule and that it can calm us.

We've learned that the value of setting boundaries for yourself and your family is great. It can change the way you relate to yourself and your kids and can help with unrealistic expectations.

We've learned that feelings can misinform. It might feel unnecessary to work and workout when Armageddon is approaching. It might feel right to just lie in bed and wallow in misery.

But we need to remember not to allow ourselves to drown in our emotions.

During this time we have learned from other professionals too and would like to make reference to a few lessons from Brenda Lasersohn, Counselling Psychologist that resonated with us:

- We have learned that words and thoughts have power, they can heal and can hurt. They can put us on a course where we spin out of control or allow us to feel buoyant and positive. It is useful to find words that speak more to their value than to a label. And to try to be honest with yourself. Allow yourself to be real and have a bad day or a bad moment. It's ok!
- We have learned that telling ourselves that we have to be positive does not make us positive. Being positive implies a fixed state. There is no all or nothing in life. We can vacillate between positive and negative, hopeful and hopeless. All are healthy and normal. In our conversations with ourselves and others we can ask questions regarding what feeds optimism which we need so desperately and what contributes to one's pessimism which ramps up anxiety and is unhelpful in these times. Listening to endless messages of how bad things are, for example, feeds pessimism.
- We also learned to see the difference between real and imagined hunger. We can learn to differentiate between the need to eat for comfort, to feel more in control, to numb something or we can choose to rise above it.
- The best lesson we have learned is to treasure what we have, to slow down and be

grateful. The rat race of life before the lockdown would go by in a blur at times, but now we have learned to slow down, to really build on and cherish our relationships, and most of all to be grateful.

- Lastly, we have re-learned the old biblical saying that “This too shall Pass”. It has never held truer meaning for us.

We would welcome our reader’s contributions if any of you have valuable lessons about the Covid 19 lockdown to share with us!

