

COVID-19: The benefits of being sociable

Some of us may be worried about the return to whatever normality might look like post lockdown and are likely to already be having thoughts about whether we will be able to re-adjust to life, when the easing of lockdown has commenced. Just as it was OK to be worried about coping with lockdown, it's equally OK to worry about the next 'adjustment' phase and whatever this may bring for you – this is in fact evidence of your brain having detected a potential threat and alerting you to this. It is important to remember that it will take time for you to get used to the new version of life in this next phase of the pandemic and that things like being outside again, getting used to increased noise levels and everywhere being generally busier, is understandably, going to take time.

As with all things, it is about taking one step at a time. We will need to become used to outside stimulation and quite frankly, what might initially feel like 'sensory overload'. Gradually, becoming accustomed to this by slowly coming back to socialisation and not expecting too much of yourself too soon, is critically important. Being kind, and patient with ourselves is key as we learn to adjust again. We may too have found a sense of safety and comfort in staying at home; reconnecting with our families in new ways and spending 'quality time' – something that in our formerly packed lifestyles was a rarity. Equally, we might have managed to 'slow down' and really live our lives in the present and in doing so, have adopted a more mindful way of living – something we know is key to maintaining our wellbeing.

As humans, social interaction is essential to every aspect of our health. Research shows that having a strong network of support, or strong community bonds fosters both emotional and physical health and is an important component of adult life. So, if you are one of those people that are worrying that you're not going to be able to go back to how things were before, or you are worried about the effects of things returning to how they were, then remember to be gentle and kind to yourself and to show yourself some self-compassion. Understand that it is going to take some time to readjust to life following lockdown - just as it took time to adjust to lockdown in the first instance - and that doing this in a slow, step-by-step manner, just like a phased return to work adjustment in the workplace, might be just what you need in your personal life too.

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 '**The benefits of being sociable**' this is being delivered live on **Thursday 12th August at 12pm**, please use the below link to register for this session-

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6402033313217968400>

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.