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How to Deal With the Emotional Rollercoaster That Is Lockdown

As we all nervously wait for news of how we'll emerge from the coronavirus pandemic, dealing with the emotional rollercoaster of living through these times is not getting any easier.

In fact, it's getting harder.



Photo by Brett Savogg from Daxxis

As the weeks in lockdown draw ever so slowly on, some of us are finding it harder to deal with the ups and downs of this new daily life. But why is this?

My own personal theory is that we've now spent so long living in lockdown, we're unable to use the 'grin and bear it' technique that many of us employed to get through the initial shocking changes to our daily lives. Essentially, we have run out of steam with no end in sight.

We're suffering from coronavirus burnout

You know that sudden switch between feeling like you've got this whole thing sorted to wanting to howl with despair at the thought of another week of all of this madness?

That's coronavirus burnout.

We've used up all our enthusiasm, all our compliance and all our patience. And don't get me started on my feelings about cooking every single meal, every single damn day. Sisyphus and his rock know nothing about futility.

But why is this happening?

We're emotionally exhausted

Burnout was originally defined through the lens of work. The classic signs of burnout are:

- Feeling emotionally drained and exhausted
- Feeling cynical and less creative than normal
- Doubting your abilities, skills and strengths
- General aches and pains such as stomach knots and headaches.

Any of these sound familiar? Many of us are experiencing these classic symptoms of burnout because the coronavirus pandemic and its effect on our lives, has left us emotionally exhausted.

So what can you do to manage emotional burnout? You need to find ways to relax and recharge. Here are three tips to help you.

1. Have a digital detox

How much time are you spending online? When we're feeling stressed and uncertain, looking for updates, news and announcements can become an addictive habit.

But in order to emotionally reset, we need to have time away from the news to focus on the present. Limit yourself to checking the news once a day, from a trusted source. And watch how much time you're spending on social media — just because it looks like that friend is having the best lockdown ever, doesn't mean that's actually their reality. So switch those devices off and spend some time just being peaceful and present.

2. Practice gratitude

There's a reason people talk about practising gratitude all the time — because it works. It can help [increase resilience](#), [overcome trauma](#) and [improve your sleep](#).

But don't think you have to find ways to be thankful for the pandemic itself. It's about noticing the small things, paying attention to them, and mentally noting that you're grateful for that moment. Perhaps your kids paint you a lovely picture. Or you notice a beautiful butterfly outside your window. Or the moon looks particularly awesome this evening. [Practising gratitude](#) is just about paying attention to these small moments and recognising that you're grateful for them.

3. Stop worrying about "wasting" your lockdown

It can seem like everyone is writing a novel, learning an obscure language or getting super fit during lockdown. But that's not the case. Social media is still working in the same way as before, and we need to remember that these representations aren't of people's realities. Setting unrealistic expectations for yourself will make the feelings of emotional burnout worse, so practice being kind to yourself. If what you need to make it through all of this is computer games, food and Netflix, then do it. What is important is self-compassion and finding ways to manage your emotions healthily.

So just remember that, whatever you're feeling now is OK, and that one day this will all be over and life will be back to something that more resembles 'normal'.

But for the moment it's about making peace with our reality as it is now, and finding healthy ways of managing our emotional burnout. And remember, this will look different for everyone, so now more than ever, it's important to listen to yourself and find out what you need to get by.

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