

Hopelessness: Ways to stay positive during COVID- 19

Think back to 2019 New Year's Eve and all those wishes, hopes, dreams and resolutions we made and had for 2020? None of us would have ever thought about a global pandemic and yet, here we are in week 16 since lockdown began in early March.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been with us since around January, but at that time it felt a long way away from us and had very little impact on our day to day lives. Coronavirus, now a "well established" disease, has left a serious situation for us to deal with, as countries the world over struggle to make sense of it and to count the cost.

There are serious long terms consequences to Coronavirus both as individuals and collectively, and there is a global struggle to come to terms with the social and economic effects we are all facing.

There have been many emotions in play throughout this, for example, grief, sadness, isolation, anxiety, loss, and a feeling of hopelessness.

At some level, many of us have felt quite bewildered by it all, and that feeling, coupled with grief can bring about feelings of hopelessness and resignation. "Why me?" Why us?" "When will things return to how they were?". Basically, to what we all once assumed as "normal".

At a time when the world, our world, has changed, it can be challenging to remain positive and hopeful. However, it is at exactly this time when we need to look to the positive and to both create and maintain hope.

So, why do we need to hope? Hope provides us with the positive mind-set needed to move us forward, to look to the future. It is both motivating and helpful. It is also good for our self-esteem, and our sense of purpose. It helps to push us forward away from tragedy and towards a hopeful future. Without hope is it possible that our physical and mental health will be affected. In fact, research has shown that suicide can come from a feeling of hopelessness, as if there is no point. The three emerging feelings associated with suicide, are desperation, helplessness and hopelessness.

We know those who are able to look forward and to be positive and hopeful tend to enjoy better physical and mental health.

The time has come now to begin to look forward, and to take stock of all the negative and positives that may have come from how we have coped during lockdown. We need to take time to adjust to the "new normal", to set new goals, and to reassess our sense of purpose.

Many will have had plans in place for example, a wedding, a family gathering or a holiday or trip abroad. The new challenges we are facing means that we have to adjust, and be realistic about what can be done now. It is important to look to now and to setting short term goals because one thing we have learnt for sure throughout this, is that projecting too far into the future isn't helpful, as no one predicated this as being our 2020.

Think of the things you would like to achieve in the short term and ask how “doable” will they be? Aim for the things that can be achieved (with the appropriate adjustment) and, be prepared to reset goals frequently.

Think of the things and people who hold importance to us for example, our friends and family, and connect with them through digital means until you can meet face-to-face.

This is going to be with us for the foreseeable future, so we need to be adaptable, and willing to accept change.

Those who have experienced mental ill health throughout this time, will need to be supported so we need to know what avenues of support are open to us.

As lockdown restrictions ease, many are worried about a “second spike” so it’s important to stick to what has been advised, even if tempted to do differently. Just as going into lockdown caused anxiety, easing the restrictions also brings anxiety and fear. This fear can cause us to feel “frozen” and not willing to move forward and, so take time to acknowledge it and address it whilst remembering, it is a normal reaction to have when faced with uncertainty.

Instead of hopelessness, look at being hopeful and share that hope with others who are within your close family and friends. That way, your dreams and hopes are far more likely to be realised.

If you would like to view the Webinar on **Hopelessness: ‘Ways to stay positive during COVID- 19’** this is being delivered live on Monday 6th July at 2pm-2.30pm, please use the below link to register for this session -

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/57125534410042380>

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.