
Thrive

Out the other end of lockdown: What can we take with us?

by AMANDA WALLIS

New Zealanders everywhere are rejoicing as we lift COVID-19 restrictions.

But, if you have bittersweet feelings about lockdown ending and moving into Level 2, you can count yourself among the many. While the last two months might have been hectic for some (kudos to all you working parents with young kids at home), or distressing for others, many of us also experienced the joy of solitude, of quiet, and of taking a step back.

On the first morning of Level 2, and the country opening back up, I winced when I heard the recycling truck loading up my neighbourhood's seven-week supply of empty wine bottles. And, truth be told, I mourned a little for the parts we'll leave behind.

So, what can we take with us? And how can we cultivate these same quiet comforts moving forward?

- Savouring. Remember how good it felt to leave your house for your daily exercise during lockdown and to have the sun shining on your face? Acknowledging and savouring these tiny joys can actually [make us happier](#). The lockdown forced many of us to slow down and appreciate the simple things in life, and as our society opens back up, we might find ourselves starting to take them for granted again (hugs from friends, barista coffees, trips to the beach...). To keep savouring and appreciating the good things, check out [these suggestions](#).
- Prioritising positivity. As we move into the "new normal", don't forget to take stock of what you learnt over the last few months about what makes you truly happy. Lockdown gave many of us the chance to perform a system re-set. Moving forward, how will you do things differently? How can you maximise your positive emotions?

Whether you deeply missed spending time with friends or particularly thrived while exercising, reading, or baking – science shows that actively prioritising these things [is good for our wellbeing](#).

- Learning. With added downtime, you might have managed to pick up a new skill, learn a language, listen to an interesting podcast, or simply read more during the lockdown. Turns out, these habits aren't just good for upskilling, they're also good for a wellbeing boost. In fact, a study published last year surveying over ten thousand New Zealanders found that continued learning was one of the [strongest predictors of wellbeing](#). Learning new things stimulates the brain and keeps us curious. For suggestions on how to keep learning post-lockdown, check out [these tips from the Mental Health Foundation](#).
- Being active. Going on a daily walk was the saving grace of lockdown for so many of us. Take time to reflect on why that was. Yes, it was partly because we were all cooped up inside, but did you notice any other benefits? Was the fresh air rejuvenating? Did the daily exercise help with your energy levels? Keeping up this same level of activity and nature immersion might be difficult moving forward as we return to our busy schedules, but [research cannot recommend it highly enough](#). Consider whether you can have walking meetings with colleagues, park further away at the shops, or get off at an earlier bus stop to keep your daily step-count up.

Here at Umbrella, we realise that this readjustment period might be just as difficult for some as the initial adjustment to life under lockdown was. Don't forget to [practise self-compassion](#), [show kindness](#) to yourself and others, and [maintain a flexible mindset](#) as you tackle the uncertainty of our "new normal". We're always here to help.