


Establishing Familiar Routines

We may not know exactly what the future holds – but we can anticipate that things will not necessarily go back to exactly how they were before. Many of us may feel that we had settled in to a ‘new normal’ during lockdown.

We may feel that whilst there are negatives to the situation and obstacles which we may have faced during the pandemic; the lockdown had given many of us the opportunity to reflect on our lives, make positive changes to our wellbeing, make extra effort to connect with loved ones and show acts of kindness within our local communities.



It could now be that as we establish familiar routines that our prioritising of time effectively will become a key skill again. We are all in different situations, so this article may not be for everyone. It may be that you have worked throughout the pandemic and you are now feeling like you have some more time for yourself. Some may now be facing a return to work or to their place of work, So will affect routine such as having to prepare lunch for the week and getting clothes ready for work for example. It may be that you have started going to the gym or for a run at lunch time, but now this may have to change with the return to work. This article looks at some tips to help you establish old routines and prioritising your time effectively.

Healthy Diet & Hydration –

If you have made positive changes to your diet, levels of nutrition and keeping hydrated during the lockdown period, it is important to try and continue this post lockdown and try to incorporate these changes in to your daily routine.

- Plan weekly meals and pre-prepare meals where possible.
- Introduce bulk cooking once or twice a week if you have a busy schedule.
- Invest in a water bottle that tracks your intake throughout the day. The NHS advises we should drink about 1.2 litres (six to eight glasses) of fluid every day to stop us getting dehydrated.
- Stock up on plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables to snack on when you are back ‘on the go’.
- Get the family involved in cooking or food preparation if this is something you have enjoyed doing together during lockdown.

Exercise –

With social interaction and our everyday movements being restricted during the COVID-19 pandemic; many individuals introduced more exercise in to their routines from home. Whilst it may not be possible to exercise as much or as often as you have been during lockdown, try and work this into your daily or weekly routine where possible –

- Consider joining a gym or health club with flexible hours for you to attend around your schedule.
- Set your alarm an hour earlier in the morning where possible to go out for a walk or do an online fitness class.
- Taking up a new sport where people meet regularly to train together.
- Access short online workouts – these are available from 5 - 15 minute sessions which might be easier to work in to a busy schedule.
- Walk or cycle to work where possible.
- If you find that exercise can’t be worked into your working week easily after lockdown, consider setting some time aside at the weekend and make it something fun that you enjoy doing – you could even get the family involved too!

Family Time –

For many of us, the lockdown had meant having a lot of extra time spent together as a family in the same household. Whilst some may have found this challenging at times, you may have also found this extra time spent as a family unit valuable and would like to incorporate more of this into your usual routines -

- Set aside 30 minutes or an hour in the evening for quality time with young children – they too will have been used to having a lot of extra time with you, which you and they may miss after lockdown.
- Work a family fun night into your routine once a week or every couple of weeks; e.g. game night, movie night, quiz night etc.
- Try and eat your evening meals together – this gives you all the opportunity to talk about your best and worst parts of your day.
- Ask each other what you have all liked about having extra time together as a family and draw from some of these positives to incorporate into your new routines after lockdown.

Communication -

During the pandemic you may have had the opportunity to reflect on the way you communicate with others now vs before COVID-19. Perhaps you have found new ways of communicating that you would like to incorporate into your new routine after lockdown –

- More effective communication at work amongst teams via regular or daily video calls.
- Delivering Webinars or Video Conferencing
- Communicating more over the telephone or using video calls rather than being reliant on messaging or emails.
- Making more effort to connect with family and friends – this doesn't have to stop once the lockdown is lifted; you may still choose to keep family quiz nights or group video calls going with friends to keep connected with each other, you may decide to make these more infrequent e.g. once a month instead of weekly.

Self-Care –

Lockdown may have allowed you to have more time to focus on yourself and to consider what matters most to you, ensure to incorporate these positives into your new routines post-lockdown. Still make time for “you”, whether that be a new hobby you have taken up, a healthy diet and exercise or just a bit of relaxation – this will all help to improve your overall wellbeing.

Prioritising time effectively?

It might feel difficult or overwhelming to try and think about how to incorporate many of these factors into our ‘old normal’, many of us may have hectic lives and busy routines usually, and to add more to it might feel unrealistic. It is important to recognise that these have not been ‘normal’ circumstances and during lockdown many of us have had extra time on our hands; time that has allowed us to introduce new things into our lives, time to reflect and have quality time with our families at home.

Realistically, we are not going to be able to ‘do it all’, but try to consider what the key positives are that you’ll be taking from your time spent in lockdown and what is most important for you. Write down what a ‘normal’ week looked like for you before lockdown and look at where there may be gaps, or things you used to do that you would now like to replace with something that is more meaningful to you now. And remember – be realistic – you don’t have to work everything in to every day or week in the way you are able to now, but even if you are able to incorporate things on a monthly basis you may feel more positive for doing so.

Here are some tips to “make time” for yourself:

- **Focus your priorities to create time** - Look at what your priorities are. Be very disciplined to cut them down to help you focus. Create a list and have small goals to help you achieve your priorities.
- **Great planning “creates” time** – Planning your time is really important. Otherwise you may have so much going on that you just run out of time. Use a diary or some sort of system to help you plan your time.
- **Keep time “in reserve” for unforeseen events** - Sometimes the unexpected “steals” time from us, however, there is no point in worrying about it. You may need to take time out to look after a loved one or new baby, or to manage an emergency project at work. Life is a marathon and you’ll be able to recoup quality time later.

For more tips please visit the Care first Lifestyle site via the below link (Username and Password are available from your HR/People team if you do not have them to hand)

<https://carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk/extranet/at-work/working-effectively/time-management>

How can Care first help?

If you feel you may need some emotional or practical support, you can contact Care first on the Freephone number. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. Whilst our BACP accredited Counsellors are available 24/7 to provide support with emotional issues, our expertly trained Information Specialists are available 8am-8pm Monday-Friday to provide advice on any practical issues that may be causing you a stress or worry and help you feel more in control of a situation.

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 **‘Establishing Familiar Routines’** this is being delivered live on **Tuesday 7th September at 12pm**, please use the below link to register for this session –

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7483941760449215500>

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.