

Coping with COVID 19 related fears, anxiety and limitations

LOVE & KINDNESS

ARE

CONTAGIOUS TOO

I strongly believe prolonged fear and anxiety (caused nowadays by the COVID-19 virus) might be more damaging than the virus itself. No one says not to think about it, ignore it or not to stay vigilant, but over-stressing about it does not help anyone.

And fear triggers the fight - flight - freeze response that instantly shifts the brain and body priorities to survive immediate danger (i.e. reduced peripheral vision, non-essential body functions diminished, blood directed to larger muscles to help us "flight/fight", narrowing the mind's focus to anticipate and escape danger to the detriment of other functions, etc.).

"When the brain is in survival mode, it is so focused on seeing signs of danger and finding something or someone to blame, that it misses signs of opportunity and fails to appreciate what is right" - Shirzad Chamine, Stanford University.

Today, most of humanity lives in fear and in restricted environments due to lock-downs, quarantine or social isolation. The media is full of do's and don'ts that add even more stress and uncertainty.

Very few of us though, I imagine, could find the courage to actually try to conquer this fear and transform current limitations into opportunities.

About our brain's reaction on limitations & about a hidden superpower...

In one of his books - The Spectrum , M.D Dean Ornish says *"If I tell people "eat this and don't eat that" or "don't smoke" they immediately want to do the opposite. It's just human nature and it goes back to the very first dietary intervention that failed - "don't eat that apple" and that was God talking so we're not likely to do better than that. And if that person's wife or husband says "honey, you're not supposed to be eating that", people sometimes start to feel a little violent. Nobody wants to feel controlled or treated like a child. not even our kids. <...> **Sacrifice is not sustainable. Love is.**"*

So instead of letting ourselves be consumed by fears and restrictions (don't go out, don't eat so much, don't work so much, etc.) we might need **to reflect more on the biggest superpower that humanity has - to reflect on Love.** In such a way that we should desire to live healthier and feel better with ourselves and around those dear to us. And not because of the negative consequences happening if we don't do it. I refer here to the love expressed by acts of kindness to ourselves and others.

Here is my “Covid-19 decalogue “, chosen from a lot of the stuff I have been personally doing to address fears and transform limitations into opportunities. I hope it will be of help to the readers, at least a little bit. Even if you only adopt some them:

1. Avoid spreading news that increases fear and anxiety (valid for both FB, LinkedIn and in company communication activities).

Sharing these kinds of articles might help your ego and get you plenty of likes but it is very unlikely to help others. Think twice if the message you want to spread is really helping the people who read it or just increases their panic.

2. Reflect on getting healthier habits such as **quitting smoking** or **eating healthier**.

But if “avoiding lung cancer” or anything that might be for your benefit does not work with you, think about setting a good example for your children and for those dear to you. It helped me when deciding to quit smoking 2 years ago. Schools could help a great deal here as they can explain to kids what the negative effects of these bad habits are and the kids will do their work with parents at home. In many cases convincing them to quit.

3. Use this work from home period as an opportunity to improve relationships important to you and left aside for some time.

It is like cleaning the attic where you put a lot of objects with emotional value. You will be amazed. If you haven't seen it already, watch this [Ted Talk](#) about what makes a good life. And even if you are at home with only your family, you can use any video app to reconnect with dear people you haven't interacted with for quite a while.

4. Focus on helping others:

Research shows that helping others triggers endorphins, gives us purpose, fosters community, strengthens relationships, etc. All leading to [improved health](#). Get involved in supporting those in need in any way you can.

5. Sleep 7-8 h/night.

And if you're too stressed for this, try [Body Scan](#) as it might help a lot in this direction. The meditation Apps mentioned below could be useful too.

And do read the amazing book by Matthew Walker, “Why We Sleep”. It's important to know that we don't have to work with ourselves if the neighbor's making noise, if our spouse is snoring like a chain saw or if we drank tea or coffee before going to sleep.

“Sleep is like a dove which has landed near one's hand and stays there as long as one does not pay any attention to it.” — Viktor E. Frankl

Harvard professor [Daniel Wegner](#) performed a series of experiments together with some colleagues, in which people tried to [suppress thoughts](#), for example by attempting not to think of a white bear. That work revealed that attempting not to think of a topic often backfires, resulting in high rates of intrusive thoughts about the topic. Wegner coined the term "ironic mental processes" for this effect, which is also known more commonly as the "white bear phenomenon".[\[5\]](#)

The effect contributes to various psychological challenges and disorders. Sleep including. People who suppress thoughts that may cause an anxious reaction often make those thoughts more intrusive.[\[6\]\[7\]](#) Wegner found that the ironic effect is stronger when people are [stressed](#) or [depressed](#).[\[8\]](#)

6. Do more physical activities.

Be it walking, jogging (if you're not exposed to unnecessary risks by going out), or indoor cardio activities, HIIT, planks, push-ups, squats. Or for the more advanced yoga, Qigong etc.

6. Meditate more than usual.

Or learn how to meditate if you haven't done it by now. Plum Village, Calm, Headspace, Waking Up, Simple Habit, 10% Happier etc. Apps can be a great deal of help.

An important aspect is discipline and an even more important one - note that meditation is like sports - is to find the one form of meditation suitable for you. That is if you want to keep using it. Avoid universally viable methods. Explore and choose the right one for you. Be it mindfulness, vipassana, transcendental meditation, loving kindness and so on.

I met many people that could not embed the chosen type of meditation in their schedule and they dropped it. For the modern person with a very busy schedule, Shirzad Chamine's [Positive Intelligence Program](#) has a pretty high adoption rate. But for any method of mental fitness/ meditation to work, don't expect major effects to be noticed sooner than 2 months. New habits take some time to build...Good effects will be felt earlier but major ones will take some time to be noticed.

8. Read books you postponed.

Be it business or non - business, whatever relaxes or energizes you. Read about improving your health and here I mention just a few books that could be of a great help: The Spectrum/Dean Ornish, The Tao of Detox/Daniel Reid, etc.

8. Reflect on your work.

On how you can improve the quality of your time spent there, on how you can improve the experience for your teams, colleagues, etc. Reflect on how your business/activity can have a lasting positive social impact

8. Think again about the **passions that you left "in the drawer" lately** or about new potential ones like

cooking, painting, or even [training your sense of smell](#) :), etc.

Therefore maybe this work from home time is actually a very good period to reflect on ourselves and on how to start living our lives after this COVID-19 crisis goes away...

Check out the services we offer and how we can help you and your company.

Find out more [here](#).