

Coping with the 'New Normal'

What does the 'new normal' look like?

As restrictions imposed because of Covid-19 ease, you may feel a mix of emotions, you may feel relieved or excited, but you might also find yourself moving through a range of different feelings and thoughts. First let's look at what the new normal looks like:

- Social distancing measures remain in place for the unforeseen future. When you are with people outside of your household it is recommended to keep a safe distance of 2 metres.
- Face mask use is recommended in certain everyday situations, such as when you are in shops, on public transport, visiting those who are medically vulnerable or when you are sharing an enclosed space with others from outside of your household.
- Everyone has a responsibility to know the symptoms of Covid-19. If you have even minor symptoms you must self-isolate and contact your GP.
- Always maintain handwashing and cough/sneeze hygiene.

You may feel one or more of the following feelings towards the 'new normal' as restrictions ease:

- Very excited about seeing family and friends!
- Worried that by seeing family/friends there is a risk to your health or their health.
- Unprepared for the changes that are coming.
- Frustrated or angry, perhaps because people aren't following social distancing measures. Or you may feel that the changes are wrong, or the measures in place aren't protecting you enough.
- Conflicted or confused e.g. you may want to socialise more now that restrictions have eased but feel like you should still stay at home.
- Protective of your new routine and you would rather not have to deal with more change or uncertainty.
- Grief for lost loved ones.
- Reluctant or unmotivated to rearrange events that had to be cancelled. This could be big birthday celebrations or weddings, or everyday things like barbecues and coffee dates.
- Uneasy about relationships that may have changed while restrictions were in place.

What can help manage these feelings?

1. It's important to go easy on yourself and go at your own pace. If you don't feel comfortable around groups of people, meet one or two friends to begin with before meeting bigger groups, in line with public health advice.
2. Get information from reliable resources and focus on facts. Try to stay focused on the positives and the true facts.
3. Take a digital detox. It is easy to become obsessed by Covid-19 and the blanket media coverage that it produces. Sometimes you need to close the laptop and leave your phone down.
4. Get outdoors and enjoy the fresh air. Ireland is a natural playground and has a lot of outdoor activities to offer from walks, hikes, cycling, surfing...the list is vast! Spending time outdoors is known to have a positive effect on how you feel.
5. Remind yourself that you will get through this. The public health authority are the experts and their advice is in place to protect you.
6. Make choices to control the things that you can change. Although the pandemic means that your choices are more limited, try to focus on the things you can change and the freedoms that you have. It might be helpful to list the things you can change on one piece of paper and all the things you can't on another.
7. You might find that it helps to express how you are feeling about the easing of restrictions by playing music, writing, drawing, painting or any other creative way that feels helpful to you.
8. Speak to someone you trust. It might feel hard to start talking about how you feel, but many people find that sharing their experiences can help them feel better. If you aren't able to open up to someone at home check resources that are available through your GP or workplace e.g. The 24/7 Mental Wellbeing Support Programme.



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