

# **From Survive to Thrive: A Toolkit for Getting Through Covid-19**

## **Part I: Dealing with the Changes**

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golden notebook 

## Introduction

At the time of writing, our world is changing rapidly. We face great unpredictability and changes to our daily lives that would have been unthinkable, even laughable, only a month or two ago.

We at Golden Notebook have decided to do what we can, and have created this quick and dirty toolkit to help deal with the changes that are occurring almost hourly. This will likely be a working document as we will share additional tools and practices over the coming months as and when needed. This part of the toolkit will look at the very real issues that are affecting us right now: Coronavirus anxiety, dealing with change, isolation, and other practical problems.

As a clinical psychologist, I am seeing a lot of Coronavirus anxiety at the moment. I recently wrote an article on this very topic, and have included the content here. With the help of business psychologist Paula Gardner, one of the Golden Notebook team, we have expanded on this information by sharing some specific advice and tools for different personality types, alongside insight as to how they might be feeling at the moment. Not only will this hopefully help you as an individual, but also give you the insight to better understand why and how others might be coping around you, and into how we can help each other. Understanding our differences ultimately increases compassion towards others and creates an awareness of each other's needs. That's how we are going to get through this - by helping each other.

Please share this toolkit with anyone you think might find it useful.

Lisa x

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## Time to get *Personal*

There are hundreds of personality tests out there, and you may have come across some when going for interviews or being assessed for developmental purposes. One test that we recommend is the [16 Personalities test](#). It is free to use, with no hard sell at the end of it. It is a psychometrically sound instrument, and, as it's free, it has a wide data pool with high validity and reliability (i.e. it's accurate and provides similar results if you take it more than once).

There are five personality aspects which the 16 different personalities fall, and which will apply to each of us:

### **Extroversion (E) vs Introversion (I)**

- how we interact with our surroundings

### **Intuitive (I) vs Observant (O)**

- how we see the world and process information

### **Thinking (T) vs Feeling (F)**

- how we make decisions and cope with emotions

### **Judging (J) vs Prospecting (P)**

- our approach to work, planning and decision-making

### **Assertive (A) vs Turbulent (T)**

- underpins all the others, showing how confident we are in our abilities and decisions

We will each fall somewhere on each of the five spectrums. Personality types are based on the five independent spectrums above, with all letters in the personality type “code” (e.g. INFJ-A) referring to a personality type being more towards one end of each spectrum rather than the other.

## **Extroversion (E) and Introversion (I)**

This is all about our personal energy, and shouldn't be confused with how gregarious or loud a person appears.

Extroverts get their energy from socialising with others. They are excitable, and other people around them will know how they feel about something. They tend to be more enthusiastic and more easily excited than Introverts.

Introverts, on the other hand, draw their energy from being on their own, and appreciate peace and quiet. They may still very much enjoy company, even crowds, but they will need to have downtime away from others to recover their energy. They can play their cards close to their chest, and are often quite sensitive to noise and smells.

## **INtuitive (N) and ObServing (S)**

Intuitive people are big picture thinkers, sometimes dreamers, and are imaginative and open to new ideas. They are more open to change and their plans can be creative and wide-ranging.

Observing people take in the world around them, using their senses, and base decisions on what they know to be true. They are often detail-orientated and grounded in what's going on now, using their past experiences to guide them. They like stability and trust what is certain.

## **Thinking (T) and Feeling (F)**

These two characteristics are probably the most obvious. Thinkers are those who tend to be logical. They don't necessarily feel less than feelers, but they are able to put their feelings aside and make objective decisions. They can be also be quite competitive.

Feelers, as you might expect, are sensitive and, well, feel. While thinkers might look at decisions logically and rationally, feelers are more likely to consider everyone's approach and feelings, and put co-operation first.

## **Judging (J) and Prospecting (P)**

People who are judging are often organised, good at planning and decisive. Social constructs of fairness and justice are also important to them. They live quite structured lives, and put those structures into place if they are not there. Someone who likes getting work done and dusted well ahead of deadline could well be a "J".

Prospectors, on the other hand, are more flexible. They are pragmatic and adapt well, spotting opportunities, but at the same time, they don't like to commit themselves to days/events/parties, etc., preferring to decide closer to the time when all the options are clearer.

### **Assertive (A) and Turbulent (T)**

Assertive individuals are more self-assured and stress-resistant. They are even tempered, don't worry too much or push themselves too hard when it comes to achieving goals.

Turbulent individuals tend to be self-conscious and stress-sensitive. As they are likely to be driven by success, they tend to be perfectionists and eager to improve. They also tend to experience a wide range of emotions.

### **How to use this toolkit:**

Go to [www.16personalities.com](http://www.16personalities.com) to get your free personality trait assessment. You can encourage anyone you are isolating with to do it too, and then talk about the results together and how they might impact the weeks ahead.

We've listed general tools that everyone can use, as well as personality-specific tools in each section below. Find the corresponding letters in your personality profile under each section to see advice and tools specific to your personality type.

## ***Coronavirus Challenges***

As we are all in this together, we are going to tackle the general things that are going on for all of us at the moment. These are:

- Anxiety
- Dealing with Change
- Isolation
- Practical Worries

# I. Dealing with Anxiety

We need fear. It is in our DNA, and for good reason. At a basic level, fear guides can help us to keep us alive and safe and alive, and keeps us alert and able to prepare for what is causing the fear. It also helps us act bravely; courage and fear go hand in hand. Only at higher levels of intensity, when it fear enters the “panic zone”, does it becomes unproductive and problematic. It is then that we need to look at “turning down the volume” and handling this emotion so it is less life-interfering.

## General tools:

- **Hold fear lightly.** One way to prevent your fear from hitting that panic zone is to hold it lightly. Notice your fear and make room for it to pass through. If you find that you can’t act on your fear and use it in a productive (sensible) way, notice its presence and breath into it. Imagine a vast space opening up around the fear sensation or thought to allow it to move freely. You might even want to express some gratitude that your “fear switch” isn’t broken! I use an empirically validated approach called *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy* to help my clients with this. I would recommend the work of Dr Russ Harris ([The Happiness Trap](#), [The Reality Slap](#)) as a helpful resource.
- **Unhook yourself.** If you notice yourself getting “hooked” on anxious thoughts or feelings, try to “*move with the fear*”, and towards something that is you value more or is more productive. Tuning in and turning to your values and strengths is helpful here. What is important to you in this moment? What type of person would you like to be and how can you move towards being that person, even by an inch? Move with the fear and towards whatever makes life more meaningful in the moment.
- **Identify what’s feeding your fear.** Even though we need fear, avoid the trap of feeding that fear. Unhook from hourly (or even more frequent) news bulletins. If you must be on your phone, mute notifications for news sites and social media – they will only spark more anxious thoughts. Turn off notifications and only check media at certain points in the day.
- **Practice compassion.** Recognise that this is likely going to be a difficult time for everyone. We are all in this together. Handle your thoughts and feelings, including your fears, with great kindness. Your fear is what makes you human. All human experiences are welcome, and that includes all thoughts, feelings and sensations. Practice compassion for others, but

also for yourself too. For more on self-compassion, I recommend the work of [Dr Kristin Neff](#), [Dr Dennis Tirch](#) and [Dr Paul Gilbert](#) here.

### **Personality-specific tools:**

Knowing and understanding your specific personality traits can give some insight on ways that could help you deal with Coronavirus anxiety.

- **Extroverts (E).** You may find that talking through things helps. Sometimes it's not about what the other person says or thinks, but that you are simply verbalising your feelings and worries rather than keeping them locked in. One way to do this effectively is to actively tell the other person what you need right now (e.g. "I don't need you to solve this for me, or even cheer me up, please just listen.").
- **Introverts (I).** As an introvert, on the other hand, you may need time alone to process what's happening around you. Don't be afraid to say that you need a little space to think right now. If thoughts are becoming overwhelming, then journaling, i.e. keeping a daily diary, is a tool I thoroughly recommend, and find very useful myself. Also, turning to one or two close confidants to share your feelings can be helpful.
- **Intuitive (N).** Being intuitive, you tend to ponder the possibilities the future might hold. As such, you may be prone to "what if?" thinking and find yourself mulling over the big picture, "what's going to happen to the world?"-type scenarios. Try to avoid getting hooked on unhelpful "what ifs". Avoid the cognitive errors of *catastrophizing* or *awfulizing*, or in other words, turning up the volume on worst-case scenarios and fortune-telling (e.g., "everyone I know will die. Everything will be horrific").
- **Observing (S).** As someone with an Observant trait, you tend to crack on and just get things done. While using your "hands-on" approach will be helpful in busying yourself as a distraction, be careful not to do so as an escape from feeling fear in the situation. The situation may call for you to downshift quite a bit, practicing patience and acceptance. Practices such as relaxation work, mindfulness and breathing might be helpful here.
- **Thinking (T).** As a T, your rational approach to the situation will be a real strength for problem-solving. But you may tend to ignore or hide feelings, favouring efficiency to cooperation. Try not to ignore or shut out your feelings. Take time to sit with them, and welcome them into the situation alongside your logical approach. Also try to make extra effort to

understand how others might be feeling in the situation, particularly those self-isolating with you. Cooperation and teamwork will be key to get through this.

- **Feeling (F).** Your emotional perception can be a strength in this situation. But be careful not to be too guided by your emotions (as they are likely to be “on full blast” at the moment) or fall into the cognitive error of emotional thinking (“I feel it’s true, therefore it *must* be true”). To avoid feeling overwhelmed, try not to feed into or absorb the fears others may have around you too much.
- **Judging (J).** As “J”s are often organised, good at planning and decisive, you are likely to thrive on structure and take action as a way of handling your fear. However, given the amount of uncertainty we are facing, you may not be able to control things as much, or take the effective action you’d like at the moment. Make room for this fear, work on accepting what you can’t control or take action on, and move *with the fear* towards what you can control in your life.
- **Prospecting (P).** While psychological flexibility may come easier to you, there is a risk of feeling lost and “just floating” in these uncertain times. Turn to activities that anchor you, or to others in your life who have a stabilising effect on you. Try mindfulness, yoga or breathing work to help ground you to the present moment.
- **Assertive (-A).** As someone who is assertive, you might be seen as “the calm in the storm”. Be careful not to step into action mode too quickly to manage your fear, as it then becomes an avoidance strategy that may very well backfire. While you might express your views or thoughts with ease, give others who might be less assertive the space to share their fears and concerns.
- **Turbulent (-T).** Being a “-T” comes with a high risk of being a perfectionist and needing external validation. High self-expectations will create additional stress in an already stressful situation. Practice self-acceptance, self-compassion and letting go of self-judgements. Similar to “Ps”, practice grounding activities such as mindfulness, yoga or breathing work.

## II. Dealing with Change

There's no shortage of change and uncertainty at the moment. New guidance and information that impacts our daily lives and information are published frequently, sometimes hourly that impacts our daily lives. How do we best deal with such a rapid amount of change and ongoing uncertainty in our worlds?

### General tools:

- **Get flexible.** One of the most important ways to deal with change is to work on your psychological flexibility. That is, the ability to let go of rigid rules and assumptions about the way the world “should” be and to find new ways of adapting to change. Challenge these underlying beliefs (e.g., replace unhelpful “shoulds” with preferences: change “this shouldn’t be happening” to something like “I wish this wasn’t happening”). A little [Cognitive Behavioural Therapy](#) (CBT) can help with this. Practice new and creative ways of adapting to the changes around you. Let go of what you can’t control by building acceptance around it and focus on the things you can.
- **Be mindful.** Add a little mindfulness into your day. Our minds are naturally in hypervigilant mode at the moment, with “what if’s” aplenty. Mindfulness is about attentional training, not getting rid of thoughts. Notice unhelpful thoughts and use mindfulness skills to redirect your attention to the present moment. Activities such as mindfulness, breathing work and yoga have been shown to increase psychological flexibility and overall mental health. There are plenty of online resources and apps out there (e.g., Headspace, Calm) which will help you to cultivate mindfulness. This will help you see what’s in front of you here and now and to stop obsessing about the future.
- **Set healthy goals.** Our minds are hardwired to not like uncertainty. Give yourself direction and structure to keep a sense of movement, even with your fear, regardless of the parameters that have been set in your life. It’s easy to go down the rabbit hole of fear if we don’t have a lot of other things going on. Maintain some semblance of normalcy to your routine (starting with getting up at the same time, getting dressed, etc.). Set a detailed schedule of your day that includes healthy habits, including any form of physical activity (see below) and healthy eating (including foods and supplements for gut-health, also proven to benefit mental health). This is our time to define and implement goals and build healthy lifestyle habits.

- **Keep looking forward.** Rather than hanging onto what's in the past, get into the habit of adopting new routines right now. What are the things and activities you can adapt so that you can still enjoy them? Start a walking routine as quickly as possible to make up for your lost visits to the gym, hold your book group or wine tasting over Zoom or Skype and raise your glasses virtually, get chatting to neighbours over the garden fence (from a safe distance!) to replace those water cooler moments at work.

### Personality-specific tools:

- **Extroverts (E).** As extroverts tend to advance important projects quickly, this is your time to focus in on an action plan that you can implement to ground yourself in a rapidly changing situation. But remember to pace yourself. A tendency to throw yourself into work may mean that you quickly burn through it, or it burns through you, causing you to feel a self-imposed burn-out. Remember that we are likely to be in this for the long haul. Take time out for breaks to practice mindfulness, exercise, yoga, or chatting online with friends. Don't forget to end your day at a manageable time and schedule in fun activities such as movie nights.
- **Introverts (I).** Introverts are well-suited to many situations and can adapt to change quickly, especially if it involves acting on an individual level. The ability to pace yourself might come more naturally given introverts tend to be reserved. Having your own space and time alone to adjust to your changing environment, recharge your energy levels and restore your calm will be important.
- **Intuitive (N).** As an N, you may prefer "bigger picture" thinking and tend to search for deeper meaning. In this situation, that may not be the most practical. Instead of leaping into the complex, try pulling back and focusing on the smaller details and more immediate day-to-day goals (e.g., What dinners can I plan for the week? What exercises can I do at home to stay fit?).
- **ObServing (S).** Observing people tend to ground themselves in what's going on in the present and like stability. That makes them focused and practical people who prefer things that are actionable, tangible, and useful. As there is a lot of unpredictability at the moment, rapid change can be especially unsettling. Use your strength in being detail-oriented to ground yourself by focusing on what you can control in your immediate situation (e.g., setting a new routine, developing healthy habits). Try to making your day as structured and consistent as possible.

- **Thinking (T).** Ts are likely to deal with a changing scenario through using logic and problem-solving. Be sure not to be overbearing with solutions or impose them on others. Practice patience, take time to listen to those around you and be careful not to dismiss or invalidate the emotions of others, especially those self-isolating with you. Cooperation and teamwork will be key to getting through this.
- **Feeling (F).** As Fs respond emotionally to change, there's a risk that you might make impulsive decisions based on their feelings. Make an effort to balance these with a logical, considered approach to the situation. Identify someone you know who is more of a "T" and ask yourself (or them directly!) what they would do. As mentioned in Section I, be careful not to fall into the "emotional reasoning" trap here as well (e.g., this feels all wrong).
- **Judging (J).** As people who are "J"s are often organised, good at planning and decisive, you probably have your freezer and larder well stocked! J's like to feel stable and secure in their life and surroundings, and feel most comfortable when the course ahead is well-marked. Therefore, change is something that may be particularly challenging for J types. Add as much structure as possible to your day (up to putting lunch in the diary). See the exercise below to help you focus on what you *can* control right now. Also, as rules, laws, and standards are important, you may get too "hooked" on what others *should* be doing (e.g., to prepare themselves, protect themselves, follow the "rules"), increasing the likelihood for unhealthy anger to develop. Developing psychological flexibility (see Section I) will be important here.
- **Prospecting (P).** "P"s are more likely to adapt to change as they are flexible and more able to roll with the punches. As someone with this personality type, you tend to be pragmatic and adapt well, and therefore you will likely have an advantage in adapting to the uncertainty around you. As mentioned in Section I, there is a risk of feeling lost and "just floating" during times of uncertainty. Setting deadlines can help you to take action. Also turn take inspiration from the "J"s in your life and try to bring structure and organization your day where you can.
- **Assertive (-A).** As someone who is assertive, you may feel confident facing day-to-day difficulties. Be sure to not take on too much during what may prove to be an overwhelming time. Set boundaries and exercise good self-care so you can take care of others. Also try to listen to what others want instead of resorting to executive decisions.

- **Turbulent (-T).** If you have a “-T” aspect, you may have a tendency to notice small problems brewing and do something about them before they become larger ones. Try not to feel that you have to tackle and control problems that seem to be happening all at once; it’s impossible here. Remember there’s no perfect way to respond to or handle this situation. See exercises below to help you focus on what you *can* control.

**EXERCISE: *Increasing feelings of stability***

Draw three large circles inside each other (or use the handout in the Appendix). In the inner circle are the things over which you have control right now, e.g. scheduling your day, getting food into the house, your attitude towards others, whether you take time to practise yoga and mindfulness, phoning a vulnerable friend. The middle circle are things that you can influence (or try to) such as convincing your 75-year-old mother that she shouldn’t be going out unless strictly necessary, and social distancing yourself to do your bit. The outer circle are all the things you can’t change. Naming the things you can’t change can help free your mind up to work on the things you can change and influence.

The *Serenity Prayer* is another helpful reminder which might be useful here:

*“Grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.”*

### III. Dealing with Isolation

We humans are social animals. Our natural instinct is to socialize and be part of a tribe, not to isolate. As such, the most challenging aspect of our current situation may be feelings of isolation and loneliness that come with ongoing social distancing measures and lockdowns.

Given isolation affects how we interact with our surroundings, we are only going to look at two personality types here: Extrovert and Introvert.

#### General Tools:

- **Stay connected (creatively).** It's vital to stay connected right now. Try to arrange virtual “meet ups” with people, over Skype, Zoom or FaceTime for example. Schedule virtual “parties” with friends and send out invites. Reach out to friends and check in on them. Consider reaching out to those you've lost touch with, as now's the time for these relationships to be rekindled. Share your fears with others; if you do, chances are you'll feel an even deeper connection with them, and them to you.
- **Remember our universality.** This is a moment of great universality. Fear is what most of us are feeling at the moment – you only have to watch the panic buying going on to see realise that. Take good care of yourself through a ton of self-care so you can take care of others.
- **Notice (and avoid) life-draining actions.** Make sure that you are not resorting to life-draining actions as a result of isolating. These are also often techniques ways to try to control suppress anxiety. While sitting in bed under the duvet and watching Netflix all day may be comforting in the short-term, it may keep you stuck in your anxiety and feelings of isolation. This also goes for obsessively checking the news or social media. Take stock of these life-drainers and set some gentle boundaries with yourself.
- **Get moving (creatively).** Isolation can make you feel stuck and trapped. One way to counter that (and stay healthy) is to get moving. Humans weren't designed for a sedentary life. Like other animals, we were designed to move. Exercise releases chemicals like endorphins and serotonin that improve your mood. Stagnation leaves us more vulnerable to unhelpful thoughts and feelings. If you are confined inside indoors (and assuming you feel healthy enough), exercises that use your own body weight or doing cardio exercises in place (like high knees or star

jumps) can be helpful. If you have outdoor space, use it! There are plenty of online fitness tutorials including YouTube videos to help with this.

- **Dealing with difficult people.** While social distancing may conjure up images of families playing card games cosily around the kitchen table, staying at home with family or house mates isn't always an idyllic situation. It can be especially hard if you're locked down if you're in the middle of a break up or having relationship problems.

**Catch rigid rules.** Sometimes it's our own personal "rigid rules" that are being violated by another person. These usually have a "should" lurking behind them, and imply that "they should know better" or "should do" something. See if you can lighten these demands by replacing them with a preference ("it would be nice if they did x y z") or, if it works, a "could" ("they could have done it this way, but unfortunately didn't"). Sometimes this technique (from CBT) can help turn the volume down on these thoughts, resulting in more of a (manageable) feeling of disappointment or frustration rather than unhealthy anger or rage. Such rigid rules or beliefs can sometimes create "static" in our relationships, and recognising our own obstacles is an invaluable part of working on our relationships.

In short, yes, there are difficult people out there. At the more extreme end, we find narcissists, sociopaths, radicals and cut-throat characters in every walk of life. Sometimes we can influence a person by sharing alternative beliefs, values or a different position, and this can be a truly rewarding experience. However, when this isn't possible, focusing on changing others can drain and frustrate us. When we accept that it's almost impossible to change them and what they do, it's easier to shine the light back onto what we can control: ourselves.

### **EXERCISE: *The Choice Point***

Whether dealing with a person who elicits an automatic trigger response, or someone you usually get along with who can irritate you after spending too much time together, it can be helpful to default to one simple question: "Who do I want to be in the face of a difficult dynamic?". This question can serve as a much-needed compass when things get challenging. However, this can only truly work if you are able to step back before the situation explodes.

1. **Identify triggers.** This involves being aware of the signals that the situation is turning stressful. It could be a feeling in your stomach or

tightness in your chest, an overall feeling of tension in your body or perhaps a more physical manifestation such as increased heart rate. When your body starts to react in this way, it's most likely producing adrenaline which is a sign that you are being triggered. The trick is to be able to notice you are being triggered, ground yourself a bit, and then come back to who you want to be, using it as a cue to pause and consider our question. This is what's called a choice point. But first, it's important to do a little grounding before being able to make a decision and act at the choice point. The mere act of examining your anger takes you out of it and can help reduce it.

2. ***Get grounded.*** Once it's clear that you are being triggered, it's at this point that you step back, breathe and perhaps even practice a bit of mindfulness. Pause and move into your senses as a way of anchoring yourself in your surroundings. Really notice what you can see, hear, touch, feel, etc. This will help to get you out of your head and into the moment. Sometimes something as obvious as taking a few deep diaphragmatic breaths will help to anchor you and slow things down. Or you may need a break to take some time to calm down and regain your composure.

This is easier said than done in a heated situation so do be aware that grounding yourself takes some practice. Sometimes you will notice your pulse racing and yet carry on anyway. Sometimes, you may step aside but fail to calm down. Needless to say, individuals who have difficulty with anger will find this exercise much more challenging. Taking a look at our own emotional obstacles and working on them independently can be an invaluable step here.

3. ***Visualize yourself at your best.*** Once you have a bit more grounding in the situation, acting at the choice point involves stepping back and noticing yourself in the situation. How would the *ideal version of you* respond? What would you see yourself doing physically? For example, would this version of you remain calm, maintain good posture, express open body language? What would your voice sound like? How would your eye contact be? Personal presentation is a big part of this and defaulting to these traits can help to align ourselves with who we want to be in that difficult moment. What personality traits, strengths or values can you bring into the moment? If things like humour, compassion or light-heartedness are important, how can you demonstrate these attributes in the moment, even if only a tiny bit?

4. ***Step back and evaluate.*** It's often helpful to reflect on why we are being triggered in the first place. There's a potential lesson here in values, as what may be happening is that something in this dynamic is not aligning with your values, or even actively challenging them and this is knocking you off balance. Personal values essentially represent what we want to stand for in life. Some of us can articulate them better than others, but we all have them. Recognising other people's values can help us appreciate our own values even more. Also, accepting that it's okay to have different values or beliefs from someone else can make things easier, if only by lowering our expectations! Remember you cannot control the other person's thoughts, words and actions. Only your own.

### **Personality-specific Tools:**

- **Extroverts (E).** As Extroverts feel the need to connect more acutely, social isolation will of course be quite challenging. You may find that boredom comes too easily. Use your outgoing energy to initiate individual or group social meetings, such as dinner or drinks parties over Zoom. It might be a good time to catch up with neighbours over that fence or across the hall. Or perhaps taking walks where you can see a friendly face and say hello (from a safe 1 metre!) might be helpful.

Someone who is both an extravert and a “J” will benefit from having regular meetups such as a morning work virtual huddle with work colleagues over Zoom, or an evening check-in with a family member or friend. Scheduling virtual parties and sending invites could also add a bit of structure and something to look forward to. Turn to that unwavering sense that people are important to you as a strength to find ways to stay connected during this time.

**Introverts (I).** Many people are talking about how introverts are welcoming this enforced period of social distancing and yet the reality is that many of them will now be living 24-7 with other people, with little or no chance of having their own space. As an Introvert, you may find this enforced closeness stifling, and so it will be important right now to make space in your immediate environment. You may want to explain that taking some downtime is an important part of staying healthy (e.g., taking care of yourself so you can take care of others). Be assertive with those around you when taking it. For example, let others know that you would like to schedule half an hour of quiet, uninterrupted time...to read, work on a hobby, etc. Look for opportunities to just take this time whenever

you can, such as in the form of a long hot bath, pottering in the garden, or an afternoon nap.

Another important point here is to not just think about yourself and your needs, but also those of others. If your child is used to playing football with their friends every night after school, relaxing your rules about PlayStation and letting them go online to play with mates might help a bit. If your partner is the quiet, introverted type and you're not, let them know that you are totally fine if they need to disappear for a few hours every now and again...even if they might have to go out for a walk on their own to do it!

## IV. Practical Worries

It's all very well talking about anxieties but this is a time where we are all facing some very tangible issues: how to put money on the table, how to cope with children at home for the foreseeable future, what to do if you live on your own and get sick with this virus. Regrettably, there are no easy answers to any of these, but here are a few pointers that might be helpful.

- **Explore options now.** Many countries are announcing financial packages for both individuals and businesses and are adding more on a daily basis. Avoid falling into the trap of sticking your head in the sand and look at what's on offer in your area, state or country as soon as possible. Even if you don't need it right now, knowing what's there and how to go about getting it will help put your mind at rest. If you think you might need it, applying will at least give you some sense of control. Take a good look at the state of your business starkly in the face and be truly honest about where you are right now.
- **Planning and problem-solving.** Regardless of your personality type, everyone should have a plan in place: how much food will they need if they and their family have to self-isolate? What will they do if someone is ill (e.g., is it possible to keep them isolated in the house?). Who is going to be the go-to person to make supermarket runs to maximise social distancing? Are there neighbours who need help? Is there anyone who needs regular medicine sorted? Can you set up your self-isolating parents with Audible or Netflix? If everyone has a say in the plan, it can help give everyone a sense of ownership.
- **Accessing help.** If you're finding it hard to make a plan (perhaps anxiety is really debilitating at the moment), who can help you sit down and work

out what you need to do? If you are struggling, there are many psychologists and therapists who are now working online. I (Lisa) started seeing many of my clients over Skype or Zoom well before we needed to self-isolate and have found that it works very effectively.

- **Providing help.** Everyone can play a part in this, and helping others is proven to help us feel better and more in control. But remember your limits and avoid the trap of placing too high expectations on yourself. Instead of leafleting all the doors on your street, you may decide to help your immediate older neighbours. Even if you are self-isolating, think about ways you can help. For example, calling someone who may be feeling lonely or scared, or playing virtual games with your nieces and nephew via the PlayStation to give your sister a much-needed break.
- **Looking After Yourself.** If you don't look after yourself, it can become much more challenging to look after others. As I've mentioned previously, exercise, supplements like Vitamin C, good nutrition, and some time out are vital. Look to creative or cultural outlets, such as music, novels, or foreign films. Turn to some self-development literature or online programmes. Loosen up your body by stretching or foam rolling (foam rollers like [this](#) can be found on amazon). Google relaxation exercises, such as Progressive Muscle Relaxation, and try them out. Or perhaps taking a hot bath with nice oils to relax or a cold shower to energize yourself might be just the ticket. This is the time to experiment and get creative, and you can apply that to self-care.

### **Just one final reminder.**

While we are all focusing on strengthening our physical immune systems, it's worth noting that we tend to underestimate our "emotional immune system", that is, our ability to cope with and recover from difficult situations. Remember dear reader that "this too shall pass", and we will get through this...together.

## APPENDIX

**Control Exercise.** Inner circle: what you can control. Middle circle: what you may be able to influence. Outer Circle: what is beyond your control

