

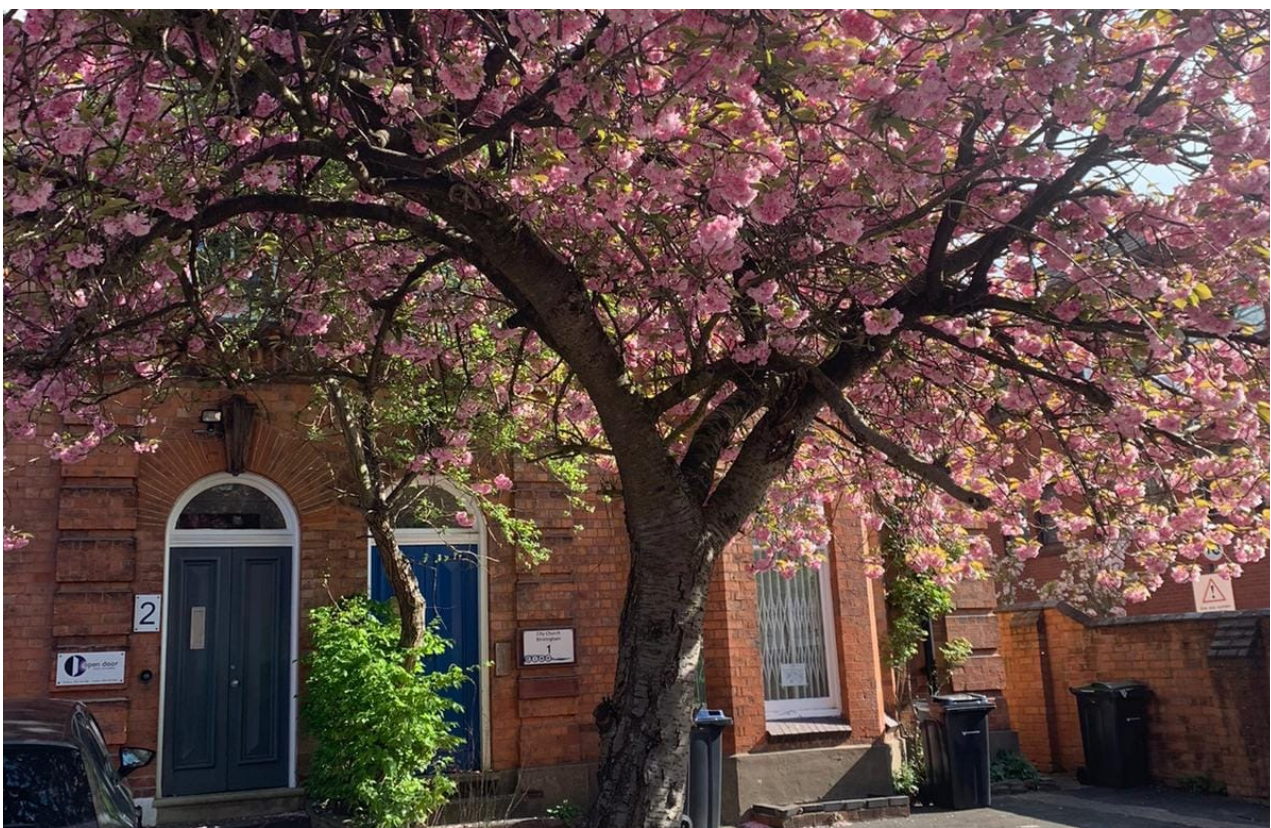


TIME TO THINK
TIME TO BREATHE



ENJOYING NATURE
BEING IN THE
MOMENT

LOCKDOWN DIARY



Our Teams Covid-19 Story..

“If I were to wish for anything, I should not wish for wealth and power but the passionate sense of potential, for the eye which is ever young and ardent, sees the possible. Pleasure disappoints, possibility never. And what wine is sparkling, what so fragrant, what so intoxicating, as possibility!” Kierkegaard

The possibility, the potential for growth and change which could emerge from Covid 19 is endless. However how do we grasp hold of this when we are so often surrounded by fear and uncertainty.

I have faced many challenges in my life, but none have prepared me for this. Every day is different, some good and positive and others so confusing and concerning that it can overshadow the possibilities ahead. The challenges and opportunities can get lost in the sea of differing emotions.

Counselling can help you see things more clearly, make choices, and move forward

I have always loved nature and on my daily walk I feel that all my senses are heightened, a bit like seeing and hearing things much more clearly, as if for the first time. "All credibility, all good conscience, all evidence of truth comes only from the sense" Friedrich Nietzsche

There are many things I miss, but most of all my two beautiful grandsons. I miss them staying with us, miss their chatter, laughter and of course those great hugs.

There have been so many deaths, so much grief and many families torn apart by this awful virus. Right now I guess like myself it's not always easy to hold onto "that intoxicating possibility"..

My life and that of Open Door have always been so inextricably linked, the fabric of each woven closely into each other. That remains the same and the work we do at Open Door to support those needing help continues and indeed will expand. I am happy that we are still so successfully carrying on with our work.

This would not have been possible if it were not for the dedication, commitment and willingness of my team. All of them, administrators, managers counsellors and supervisors made the swift transition to work remotely and carry on with their work. I am very proud of all of you. No fuss, no complaining, showing great care and compassion. Thank you.

We will continue as we have always done supporting each other and our clients. Keep safe, stay well. We will find our new normal and we will see even more clearly the vast intoxicating possibilities ahead of us.

CARMEL MULLAN-HARTLEY

As a counsellor, I am familiar with working with individuals at a time of personal crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic has been a new experience of working in what could be called a collective crisis. The dramatic social changes that have accompanied the pandemic seem to have had a profound psychological affect on us all. Paradoxically, in our new socially distance world we seem on some level to have been brought closer together, through our shared experience of lockdown..

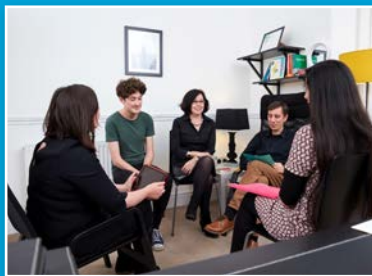
This closeness seems self evident in how my clients speak with great regularity about 'We' as opposed to 'Me'. Although they are all individuals they inevitably speak about 'We' in terms of a sense of a collective purpose, in such statements as when ' We' get out of this. They are identifying themselves more frequently as social beings. Self recognising that their lived experience is intricately woven into the collective fabric of us all. It would seem a fitting testimony to all that has been lost throughout this time, if we could retain some of our collective identity and purpose, as we create a new post Covid-19 society for ourselves. **MARK DEFREITAS**

Trying to articulate the impact of the pandemic involves the delicate balance between optimism and honesty. I waver, not only day by day but hour by hour and moment by moment, between inextricable fear and glimmers of hope for a different and better life ahead.

I miss so much about life before COVID 19, mainly the small things, ferrying my children around to their after school activities, the daily school run with both the inane and beautiful chats between us, time with my parents who are so precious to me, and the freedom to pop out for drink or a stroll around the shops. I yearn for the return of these days but with that I am aware that the aspects of my life I am happy to say farewell to will return, the rushing, clock watching, juggling the plates.

When we first went into lockdown the prospect of home schooling the children, whilst trying to navigate them emotionally through this, came with a sense of great responsibility. 8 weeks in I know now these are the





greatest days of their lives, uninterrupted time with their parents, lazy starts and long lunches, baking and crafting. Few generations before and after will experience this and I am trying to soak up every glorious moments, even when we all get a bit tired and ranty.

The pandemic won't break us but it will define us. We are irrevocably changed, there is no going back to the heady days of pre corona virus. There are though new and exciting times ahead in which we can carry forward all the lessons learnt, the recriminations of the past and the joy of a more simple life in which we truly hold onto the things that REALLY matter.

COLETTE HARTLEY

Telephone counselling has come with some challenges. Mobile connections are sometimes really bad. I miss being able to pick up on non verbal communication, which can speak volumes during a face to face session. Silence can be difficult, although with one client, no words were spoken for about 10 mins. Surprisingly, it didn't feel uncomfortable. I think she just appreciated someone being there for her at a difficult time in her life.

Being on lock down has also had its challenges. I miss the team that I work with, the support and encouragement that we give each other, means a lot after a difficult session. I miss my family and friends. I miss being able to walk straight into a shop or supermarket without having to queue up. The anxiety which comes over me each time I leave the house, which is only for essential items and daily exercise.

I am grateful for face time, which keeps me connected with family and friends, the daily evening walks I go on which keep me physically, emotionally and mentally healthy. I am most grateful for the quality time that lock down has given me with my family. We've gone back to basics. We talk a lot, play cards and board games. We bicker and fall out too, but we are closer to each other than we have ever been.

MARIA FORDE

I've learnt to be more patient with myself and others. I remind myself to accept that my thoughts, feelings and behaviours about the current situation can fluctuate more frequently throughout the day, and don't need to be resisted, just acknowledged.

Having the time to learn to play the piano and how to record multiple voice parts in harmony has kept me entertained and occupied (although I doubt my neighbours would say the same!). I realise now I always had the time to do these things, I just sometimes prioritised other demands on what I "should" be doing with my time. So I am now much more mindful about "choice" in my time, whilst being kind to myself in terms of not always needing to be productive or creative, just going with what feels right "right now".

I am taking more notice of what energises me and drains me, in terms of tasks and thoughts. So more time talking to people who motivate and inspire me, less time with the news and reducing my screen time. I've found it handy to create a list of the key people I have in my support network – those people I can get different kinds of support from. Those who will listen and empathise are top of this list (I've found I need them more than I realised, as my default is to do this for others), but I also remind myself of those people I can call when I need practical advice and those who I can have a really long laugh with.

When I take time to reflect about how I can help others, even when I feel overwhelmed for whatever reason and unsure what to say, I frequently return to the famous quote from Maya Angelou "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

MATT DIX

Telephone counselling has been very challenging. I have learnt a lot about rapport and empathy. There is been sense of appreciation of the support that is been offered for the vulnerable young people. That is what is important for me to keep going on. I feel lucky that I can still offer some support to young people despite of difficult lockdown situation.

Lockdown experience is changing me and making me appreciate more of what I have. I am grateful for my work, the family and friends I have. Personally, I miss the hugs with my family and friends. Professionally I really miss seeing my colleagues. It feels lonely at time working on telephone. But I am happy with the support I have from Open Door and have been connected with everyone.

If anything that is important to keep going on is having a routine. I try to keep the same work and home routine which helps. Also, it's helpful to keep busy. Lockdown time is very challenging and feels sad to see what is happening around us. But I am hoping soon this will change and we all will go back in our busy lives so I feel the time with family is precious and trying to make the most of it.

SUPRIYA

Initially this lockdown started off very scary for me- I have a husband that needs shielding, I myself have a condition and a family that we're constantly in an out. Anyone of us could bring the virus home and that could be the end of my husband.

Fast forward now 7 weeks later and although the same threat applies- I have changed. I have had sooo much time for reflection and with the onset of Ramadan I feel stronger spiritually. Everything happens for a reason.

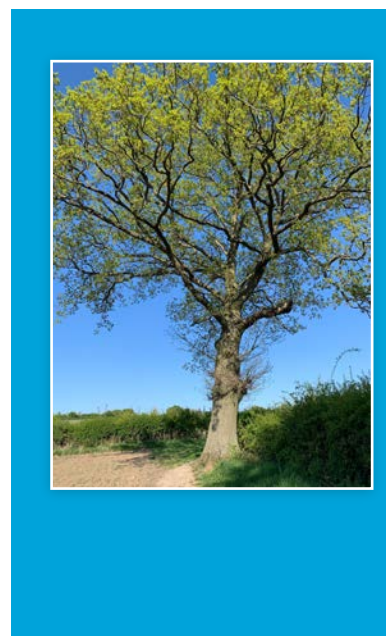
I've had time to spend in the garden, more time with my husband and family. My work as a counsellor although challenging as I'm working in a different way is causing me to reflect deeper with my clients.

I have a routine now which is going to be hard to break. I do an online exercise class which I thoroughly enjoy.

Life won't be the same again. I have changed and it will be hard to go back completely to the fast paced life I was leading- always in a rush- a rush for what?

The simple things in life was what I was missing.

FARAH MALIK



Initially the shock of seeing the world that we know begin to go into a strange sort of hibernation period took over and then gradually a new way of living for us emerged as life carried on; Carl Rogers actualising tendency came to mind as I tried to make sense of things "the bin in which we stored our winter's supply of potatoes was in the basement, several feet below a small window. The conditions were unfavourable, but the potatoes would begin to sprout" - "under the most adverse circumstances, they were striving to become".

Just as I tried to enable clients to fight, to re-emerge; stronger, better, confident and more able to deal with what life throws at them so too was I encouraging myself to deal with what was happening, to accept it wasn't in my control. And so I could either let it consume me and let anxiety run riot or I could accept it for what it was and carry on doing what I knew well; continue helping others!

Although the virus had had an impact on client work over the phone, people still had their main issues and concerns to focus on, it did not dominate people's lives and that was almost a good thing.

The lockdown took a little time to adjust to and telephone counselling is useful to a point especially for those clients who don't like to leave their homes or who suffer with anxiety and shyness. I do miss the humanness of it all though I miss seeing clients face to face. I miss my colleagues too, the team at Open Door are so supportive of one another and the fact that we are all doing the same thing keeps up the morale which is something we can't similarly get in our homes.

I am very impressed by the resilience I have experienced from my clients, who have not let the virus overtake everything else in their lives, thank you for showing me that we as humans are always striving to survive despite even

the most challenging of situations. I hope that this slow halt allows us to reflect, do the things we never quite found time to do, spend precious time with loved ones and work through what is needed before the grind begins once again.

SHABNAM KHAN

Currently, I'm struggling between trying to stay positive and not shaming myself during my off- days .After many weeks I've finally managed to establish a routine that's working for me .

When I'm working or cooking a meal, I don't have time to think about my disappointments or cancelled plans .The discomfort I feel about the unjust disparities between the rich and poor, and anxiety towards the uncertain future and my sadness around not knowing when I will get to spend quality time with my parents again.

I have to keep reminding myself it's ok if I'm struggling with coming to terms with this some days , and other days feel positive and upbeat .

It is important for me to welcome all my emotional experiences, even the ones that make me uncomfortable.

That's the only way I can process them and let them through .

Writing has helped, I've always found journaling helps me do this too .

TRANAM SULEMAN

I'm coping with the lockdown by gardening I have been growing a few plants from seedlings and I've transferred these now to outside. I've been cycling where I can. I also planted a tree at the weekend. I have been largely alone during lockdown but keeping in touch with friends and colleagues through video calls. I've also had to take breaks from mainstream media and social media. We don't have to like what's happening but we do need to accept it. I have also been doing weekly mindfulness classes via Zoom which I am enjoying. I am also continuing with providing counselling sessions.

JAKE

I've found lockdown tough for all sorts of reasons. In one respect, I've had a lot of anxiety around gathering in public spaces like supermarkets. It's also been difficult to isolate from friends and family for so long, and to refrain from many of the usual day-to-day activities I'd find enjoyable.

That said, it has been possible to mitigate those anxieties by focusing on the things I can do, but might not usually appreciate.

I'm fortunate enough to be isolating with my partner, but using the phone and video call apps to chat with family and friends has allowed us to stay in touch with those we care about, and to value the time spent with them to a greater degree than before.

It's also allowed me to do a lot more reading than I'd usually have time for, and the calmer atmosphere and clearer air has made me enjoy walking even more than usual!

For me, the best advice has been to delve deeper into the things you enjoy but usually neglect, and take it one day at a time!

SEAN MADDEN

It is very difficult to put into words the many emotions, ups and downs over the Covid-19 lockdown period. I have gone between feeling frustrated and restricted to embracing and accepting the situation. But not necessarily in a straight line, often in a jumble and a muddle!

What has come to the surface for me are the many encouraging and positives about human nature during times of testing. The community where I live has shown such a lot of comradeship, loyalty, humility, courage, generosity and love that has been a privilege to be a witness to and a very small part of.

Also, ironically although I have not been able to visit family and friends during lockdown, I have actually spoken to them far more than I would have 'normally'!

This Lockdown Covid-19 will definitely go down in history and will never be forgotten but hopefully for some very positive and uplifting reasons as well as very challenging ones.

ANITA



Here to help!

Call: 0121 454 1116

Email : info@opendoorcounselling.org.uk