

Pivoting: COVID Lessons For Individuals

Posted **December 26, 2020**

During this past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has turned our lives upside down and changed not just the way we live and work but also how we think and behave. Every part of the world has been affected, and every aspect of life has been impacted. Our everyday routines were brought to a stop, and any sense of normalcy has been lost. While we stop and look at the world around us, we cannot help but realize what we used to take for granted. If anything, perhaps there are some life lessons to take away from this pandemic. If someone would have approached us a year ago and told us that, in 2020, countries would essentially shut down for three months; the busiest thoroughfares in cities across the world would be empty of traffic; schools and colleges would close for an entire semester and blockbuster releases would be put on hold indefinitely, we probably would not have believed them.

The tales of mass shutdowns and cancellations of in-person gatherings, from sporting events to concerts to graduations, sound like scenes from an outrageous sci-fi movie with an unbelievable plot but the fact is we've all changed this year. We've lived through historic times, and it's nearly impossible to experience something of this magnitude without it having an impact. The time-out from regular life forced us to reexamine our values, our relationships and our lifestyles, while determining whether we are living a life of design and not one of default.

Now that most lockdowns have ended and life is starting to return to normal (or a variation of the 'new normal') in many countries, let's take a few moments to reflect on some life lessons we can learn from living under lockdown:

#1: Loved Ones (Family, Friends) Are Priority

This is an essential life lesson to take away because the people closest to you deserve your time and attention, and vice versa. Use this time to reforge these relationships so that you can carry them with you forever. No more excuses for not having enough time to do so; we have enough technology at our fingertips to stay connected no matter what so use this time to strengthen the bonds you do have.

#2: Social (Virtual) Interaction Is Vital

COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of social interaction and human contact within almost every aspect of our lives (like education, employment, entertainment, and recreation). Because humans are social creatures, needing interaction and physical contact, the efforts to reduce the spread of the virus, including physical distancing, quarantine, and stay-at-home orders, have prompted and exacerbated social isolation and loneliness. The increase in virtual engagement, whether for school, work or entertainment, has allowed, at least for the time being, a safe, socially distant way to connect with our loved ones and peers.

#3: Mental Health Is Wealth

Confinement, boredom, coping with fears, anxiety and depression are some of the issues facing many of us daily during this pandemic period. Mental health is an integral part of our health and needs to be continuously addressed, just like our physical health is. Use this time to focus on activities that will help to positively stimulate and improve

your mental state and prioritise self care during this time.

#4: Health & Wellness Are Important

Until you are taking care of yourself, you will not be able to fight Covid-19 or any illness. Take steps now to redefine your view of fitness and health by paying attention to your food and activity levels, and work on developing healthy habits and build a healthy lifestyle. Think of food like it's medicine and use it to work for you and keep you fit while paying attention to your activity and movement. Take care of yourself now so that your body and mind can fight for you later.

#5: We Are Resilient

The pandemic has been a time of extraordinary change, and we have had to rapidly change and adapt to the evolving situation. Many individuals lost jobs and have been forced to find creative ways to cover their monthly expenses while others began working from home. Schools launched online with virtual learning and many physicians started offering telemedicine. This pandemic has been a testament to just how resilient we are as humans and our ability to be flexible and creative in the face of uncertainty.

#6: We Are A Global Family

Often we think of each country as a separate entity and being very different from one another but within a few months of the virus first being identified, it spread to nearly every country, and a global pandemic was declared. Despite the differences and distance between places, we are battling the same virus and having the same struggles. It's a reminder of just how much of a global family we are and how our world economy and society are interconnected on many levels, including supply chains, communications, technology, and travel.

#7: Be Mindful Of Pollution

Climate change is real and a major positive coming out of this pandemic is the halting of production and shutting down of factories. The result is air pollution levels being at an all-time low. The planet doesn't need us; we need it and we should start deliberately respecting the ground we live on so we will extend our ability to live in it making life better for ourselves and our families.

#8: Life Is Precious

With over 1.6 million lives lost globally to Covid-19 to date (and over 76 million confirmed cases worldwide), this pandemic has forced us to re-think our priorities and reflect on the value of life. It is also a reminder to never take anything for granted because life is precious and we need to appreciate the smaller things while expressing gratitude for family and friends. It is also important to make time to connect with these loved ones via video calls and text messages until you are able to meet in person so they know just how much they mean to you.

#9: Spend Less & Save More

While spending money can be a wonderful stress reliever many of us were able to save, mainly by not eating out or shopping for items we did not need. This means that we don't need much to be happy because much of what we have is good enough. Instead, we should always express gratitude for what we have and ensure going forward, that we reconfigure how we treat our hard-earned dollars, spending wisely and showing more respect for our money.

#10: Create An Emergency Fund

For anyone who couldn't figure out why they needed an emergency fund before, we hope it all makes sense now. You

should always have about 3-6 months' worth of living expenses securely saved and untouched except for in an emergency. The purpose is to give you a cushion if you become unemployed or if you are transitioning between jobs. Going forward, this is also your pandemic relief fund so that you don't go into debt or have to sell you prized possessions to get by.

#11: Have a Career Back-up Plan

Many people are suffering pay cuts or losing their jobs during this time and while multiple sources of income are one way to cushion yourself in the future, we should all also consider career backup plans going forward. This crisis has shown us that you never know what can happen and we all should have an idea of what else we could do with our skills; or what areas we'd be willing to learn so that if we're forced to, we can pivot effectively.

#12: Slow Down

We live in a world where we are constantly under pressure to be productive, to compete and be better than our peers or ourselves without taking breaks. While this has resulted in many of us having successful careers it is not sustainable and can lead to burn out as we lose our work-life balance. The pandemic has forced us to slow down and live one day at a time, paying keen attention to where we are at. It is important for us to do a better job of being present and being more mindful. We all know that life is short so let us really enjoy it and make every moment count.

Let us carry these lessons with us as we move forward so that we, as a society, are better as a whole because of this experience. We should not make the same mistakes we have been making and we should not forget what the lockdown taught us about our own resilience, strength and courage. When pushed into a challenging situation, our true colors shine. 2020 has been a year unlike any we've ever seen and we should use these unique circumstances to grow in ways we never have before. We need to use these essential life lessons even when we start moving forward and go back to whatever new normal awaits us, being fully aware that this is a wake-up call and we must learn from it as it simply cannot be business as usual.