

SANE AUSTRALIA

SANE Australia Mental Health Meet-Up

Date: 12/08/2021

Title: Lessons in Lockdown

Description: Let's share and reflect on some of the things we have learnt from lockdown, from fighting off boredom and navigating overwhelm and uncertainty to remaining connected.

TideisTurning (PSW) Welcome everyone to today's Peer Group Chat talking about lockdown.

First, we'd like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the various lands we are all joining this event from. We pay deep respect to the Elders of those Countries, past and present, and we further extend that respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people joining this group tonight. This always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

This is a new peer support service we are running! Because of this, we really value your thoughts on how it goes, so we will send a link to a short survey at the end of this chat for you to complete. While this survey is optional, it is a chance to provide feedback for us to improve our services. In case you might need to leave part way through the event, you can access the survey here now: https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW

Tonight, peer support workers @TideisTurning and @CalmingNature will be facilitating a discussion around the topic of lessons in lockdown. Whether you have lived experience of complex mental health issues, you care for someone who does, or both, I'm sure everyone has

learnt a lot from experience with lockdown. We'll be moving through a number of discussion questions tonight, and it's entirely up to you how much or how little you are comfortable with sharing. Some of the conversation could be heavy in nature as we may talk about our mental health struggles. @Otter, who moderates on the SANE Forums, is working behind the scenes to ensure our safety.

If you're having any technical difficulties, please see our FAQ (<https://www.sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat/chat-faqs#what-if-i-am-having-a-tough-time-and-need-immediate-support>). If you can't find an answer to your question there, please message @Otter directly.

We're looking forward to creating a space where we can reflect and learn together and expand our ideas of living through lockdown! Lastly, just so you're aware, the transcript of this group will be made available for download afterwards on SANE's Peer Support website.

TideisTurning (PSW)

Welcome everyone! We'll be starting the discussion shortly, and will just allow a bit more time for people to log on and join. In the meantime, feel free to introduce yourselves! I'm @TideisTurning
Hi TideisTurning and CalmingNature it seems I did get in after all!

Eth

TideisTurning (PSW)

Yay! @Eth Glad to have you with us!

CalmingNature

Hi @Eth , we're glad you were able to join us! :blush:

CalmingNature

Hi iPhone, its great to have you hear as well!

Otter (Moderator)

Hi @Eth and hi @iPhone and @Mex !

CalmingNature

Welcome @Mex !

TideisTurning (PSW)

Ok, let's get the discussion going! What are everyone's experiences with lockdown?

CalmingNature

This is my second (and hopefully last) lockdown. Like most people, I find lockdown challenging as it disrupts my routines and makes it difficult to connect with others. I have also experienced lockdown fatigue however, positive things have come out of lockdown for me as well!

Mex

Thanks for welcoming me

Mex

This is my sixth lockdown, I can tell you its possible to get through them relatively unscathed

CalmingNature

Thats very reassuring to hear @Mex

Eth

I'm fairly ok - just had the first week here of lockdown. Missing lots of things but mostly tai chi, which I usually go to twice a week. Also not going to my DBT course again until I'm fully vaccinated (2nd shot

next Tuesday). Staying fairly positive doing tai chi with some good music which really made me feel good. And cooking some nice things just for me - usually I only bother when I'm cooking to share with family. As they live elsewhere (I moved to my own flat late last year) I'm unable to get together with them weekly like we usually do. Had a lovely walk to a local rose garden and park today. Getting outdoors when I can is helping a lot with MH.

Eth

I'm also doing a lot more writing and colouring mandalas daily.

TideisTurning (PSW)

What ways have you found to cope with the frustrations of lockdown, such as the monotony of being stuck at home?

CalmingNature

It sounds like you have some fantastic activities to help keep you busy @Eth . I agree, getting outdoors definitely helps with my MH as well.

Mex

One thing lockdown does is to disrupt your routine, I am a 'list' person so I created my own routine/s and I set the alarm on my mobile to keep me on track with to do tasks.

TideisTurning (PSW)

That sounds like a great strategy @Mex :)

Eth

I use my alarm a bit too. It's a fine balance between having some routines but also some unplanned feel-good things.

TideisTurning (PSW)

For me, having some sense of routine, however small, really helps (for even more on that, keep an eye out for the next OPG on routines!). For instance, the majority of my days have a lot of structure and routine thanks to being able to work. On other days, I have things scheduled in, like a weekly catchup with a friend or a particular task or project I continue to chip away at.

Mex

I use my mobile to set alarms for things on my 'to do' list. Lockdown breaks up my routine so I create my own with alarm reminders.

CalmingNature

During lockdown I make sure to go out on a walk every day to get some fresh air and help clear my head like you were saying @Eth. I have also been reading, playing with my pets and doing sudoku puzzles. Maintaining/creating routine has also helped me!

Eth

I'm also keeping in touch with a few good friends by phone and zoom. I think community connections are crucial to getting through lockdown isolation.

CalmingNature

Welcome @Snowie !

TideisTurning (PSW)

Hi @Snowie! :)

Mex

sorry new to chat rooms didn't mean to repeat that

Snowie

Hi all

CalmingNature
TideisTurning (PSW)

@Mex I love that you've set alarms on your phone for things on your to-do list - ill have to try it!
Prolonged lockdown can be overwhelming, are there any strategies that you have been using or could use in future to help you get through this period of overwhelm?

Eth

Staying a step ahead making sure I have what I need (food, chemist etc) in advance in case my support workers have to cancel at short notice. I am only able to have them or my brother with the current rules.

Mex

Have been listening to 'The Chills' a kiwi band and their best song is about being on the dole. "in the doledrums of the dole" a bit like lockdown

Eth

I've been listening to Oka.

CalmingNature

I have been occasionally engaging in distractions when I feel very overwhelmed (it's important to also allow yourself to feel what you're feeling) but temporarily distracting can be helpful for me. I tend to distract by doing things like reading and watching TV, it can be great to temporarily escape to another world. I also make sure to practice mindfulness regularly to bring me back to the present and I also journal to help me express my thoughts and practice gratitude to remind myself of what im grateful for!

Otter (Moderator)

Not to be hard on myself for having the occasional day where I proudly do absolutely nothing but rest!

CalmingNature

Hi @Shaz51 and @victorymarch !

Eth

I do all those things too CalmingNature. Start my day with colouring mandalas which breaks me out of cyclic ruminating that I'm prone to, especially when I'm not sleeping well (most of the time).

Mex

Good not to get too much covid news all day, best to restrict to a reliable news source and vic emergency for updates on lockdown rules

Shaz51

hello @CalmingNature

CalmingNature

Colouring in is fantastic! but im sorry to hear you aren't sleeping well @Eth

Shaz51

way to go @Otter (Moderator)

CalmingNature

I completely understand @Mex , I'm having a break from the news myself

iPhone

Hi sorry technical difficulties signing up!!

Mex

Exercise where possible during the day helps me sleep

CalmingNature

All good @iPhone , im glad you were able to join us!

Eth

I try to catch the 11am updates on TV and also follow my local MP on fb as the tv news tends not to say much about my region.

adge Hi everyone. Lockdowns are "Brave New World" (Aldous Huxley).....

CalmingNature Welcome @adge !

Mex it is winter so make best use of the daylight hours

Shaz51 we only had a small lockdown so far -- 3 days , no work , slept in , stayed up late , did some trimming and gardening at our place , and it rained and rained for 2 days @CalmingNature

Snowie I try and go for a walk if I can motivate myself. Some days I try and have a news free day or at least some hours in there

CalmingNature @Shaz51 temporarily having a break from work can be great and its good you've been able to get some gardening done - lockdown can be great for getting to things you've been meaning to do for a while!

TideisTurning (PSW) **I think a few of you have mentioned some already, but are there any other strategies you've implemented in your life to help manage the uncertainty lockdown can bring?**

adge Lockdowns cancel my Only Social Contacts with Anyone - Which increases my Social Isolation. So it's Not Monotony for me - It's Living in almost Total Isolation, like Shipwrecked on an Island....

Shaz51 very true , but have to be ready for the expectations of anymore down the track or longer next time @CalmingNature

Mex If you want to rock away your lockdown blues then check out the you tube clip for 'Coronavirus rhapsody" its brilliant

Snowie Adge I agree, it total sends me into social isolation.

TideisTurning (PSW) Sorry to hear it @adge I'm really glad you're able to connect with us here :)

CalmingNature I'm sorry to hear that @adge, lockdown can be very isolating. We also have a peer support service here at SANE that you may be able to contact for some extra support if needed.

Otter (Moderator) Though it gets said a lot, Meditation and Mindfulness, while hard to do at times in isolation, can really bring me back into my body and the present moment instead of worrying about the future or feeling bad about the past

CalmingNature I have worked hard to maintain my routine. I found in the first lockdown, I stopped doing my routine due to lack of structure. This lockdown I have maintained my routine which has helped maintain structure which has helped me manage the uncertainty. It can definitely be hard to find motivation to do this though!

adge Thanks @TideisTurning (PSW)

Mex Its strange but I feel that all the panic and confusion and stress is very like an episode for me, but I know I can get through this because its happening to everyone and a lot of people can sympathise

adge Thanks @CalmingNature. I'm making use of those Peer Support Phone Calls - They have been Very Helpful. They're all very empathetic & understanding....

Mex Its very hard to be isolated,

CalmingNature @adge I'm glad you're finding the services helpful!

TideisTurning (PSW) You're definitely not going through this experience alone @Mex

adge Hi @Snowie - Sorry you have similar experience with Lockdowns.

Mex i learnt that through the six lockdowns

Eth I had to end a very close friendship last week and it's left a big hole in my world, but at the same time I recognize that it was a toxic relationship for me. I feel calm about the decision but I think there's a lot going on under the surface - it's not unusual for me to have delayed reactions. Bad timing - it was the day we went into lockdown so I lost a lot of things at the same time.

TideisTurning (PSW) **Lockdown and physical distancing have likely made it harder to connect with loved ones. What ways have you found to stay connected?**

adge You see I have few phone contacts - Certainly none that I can draw on during a Lockdown - So I cannot really compensate for Activity Cancellations, by phoning people...

Eth telephone and zoom and skype and facetime

CalmingNature @Eth It's good that you were able to recognise that it was a toxic relationship for you however, ending a friendship can be very difficult. It's good that you're feeling calm about the decision you've made, it sounds like it was the right decision for you which is important. Reach out if you need though!

Mex with the 5km limit I met up with a friend who lives several streets away and we go for walks with his dog

CalmingNature I am very grateful for modern technology during these times! I make sure to message my loved ones regularly to check in

Eth I am lucky to be re-connected with a few friends and family after decades of total isolation. The first lockdown I was all "I can do this. I've had plenty of practice" and let a lot of things slide for too long. This time I'm trying to be proactive sooner.

CalmingNature I love that @Mex , animals can be so therapeutic!

Mex I think everyone realises or will realise the stress that lockdowns create for everyone and will take what happens 'with a grain of salt'

Mex i find that asking someone how they're felling has become a major question and people really want to talk to others now.

Eth It's really good knowing I have the forums in my life too. Lots of good friends made over the years I've been coming and going.

iPhone I'm studying at tafe so it's online and it keeps me occupied for some of the time. I miss my volunteering and I had started to do a bit of socializing between lockdowns. In some ways I find it's a good opportunity for me to come to terms with a lot of the challenges I've been through.

CalmingNature
adge It's good that you have tafe to help keep you busy @iPhone , boredom can be difficult to manage. Lockdowns don't affect my contact with any Relatives or Immediate family - They all live on the other side of the Continent. I can still phone my Mum & brothers - Although my brothers don't do phone calls any more. It's the Immediate regular social contact that get completely deleted - This include 2 Yoga Classes, Fitness Class, + Fortnightly Social MH Lunch Group.

Mex Getting covid tested is stressful, i've been tested 4 times and its a bit scary.

Eth I'm in the local disability alliance too and they have a few groups I'm in - womens' group, mental health support group, catch-up crew ... all now meeting on zoom. It's really nice to see familiar smiling faces. I see more of them with zoom than I ever did in person.

Mex all clear each time, last time had a sore throat but couldnt visit my GP until i was cleared

iPhone My family is all interstate so I'm very isolated but I'm used to that. Before lockdowns started I stayed home a lot anyway. In some ways it's easier like this as it's something everyone is going through. Before I felt like I was missing out on life but now it's just the way it is everywhere.

CalmingNature
TideisTurning (PSW) @Mex I'm glad each test has come back negative! The tests are quite uncomfortable and stressful!
How might loved ones be able to support you during lockdown? Or, how could you support your loved ones?

Eth Keeping in touch and just listening to how things are for them.

Mex What did Vinnie Barbarino used to say on 'welcome back cotter'... 'Up your nose with a rubber hose'!

Mex Thats what the tests feel like

Shaz51 by texting

iPhone I call my parents sometimes like 3 times a day and just say hi. They are in locked or were at least for a few days so they can relate more. I made a friend in Facebook and we chat almost every day.

TideisTurning (PSW) It sounds like that sense of normalisation of your experiences has been really big for you @iPhone

Eth I have to say that part of managing better this time around is making sure I'm not online for too many hours at a time. I was in a zoom before this that started at 5.30 so I'll probably drop out soon. Great discussion everyone. Thanks for being here.

iPhone Yeah it's been a bit like that @TideisTurning (PSW) I don't like to say it but I think I'm benefiting overall but it's hard as well.

TideisTurning (PSW) Thank you for being with us @Eth and for all your invaluable contributions this evening!

CalmingNature Thats ok @Eth , its been great having you here!

TideisTurning (PSW) **What have been some positive things to come out of lockdown?**

TideisTurning (PSW) It's great there's been that upside for you @iphone. Especially when there can be harder things, it's really good to be able to draw out the good :)

iPhone I haven't had a proper hair cut since lockdowns started but I'm thinking of getting it cut soon. It's been fun and a good distraction having something different about me. I lost 20kg since last October too so feeling much better about myself.

Mex My house is clean, my garden is ready for spring, my desk is clean and i've managed to keep fed. I saw a post that sais there are two benefits from working from home

CalmingNature I have gained a new appreciation for things I previously took for granted like going out for coffee with friends and going for a drive. I also have a new found love for going for walks and connecting with nature!

Mex You have a job, you have a home, everything else is a bonus

TideisTurning (PSW) I feel like lockdown has slowed the pace of life down a little and reminded me of some great basic things like snail mail for instance. How cool is it to get something in the letterbox that's not a bill? An unexpected parcel on the doorstep? Also, I've been able to establish some really good semi-regular routines like a bit more consistent regularity of contact with some loved ones.

adge Yes a new appreciation for Ordinary things @CalmingNature - I can Relate to that....

adge No I don't have a Job - I lost my Job directly due to Covid.....

iPhone life has definitely slowed down @TideisTurning (PSW) it's a good thing in some ways

Mex sorry adge weve all lost at least some work due to covid

Otter (Moderator) Have gotten to know myself better and continue learning to enjoy and appreciate my own company when I'm not with others

TideisTurning (PSW) How about you @Shaz51?

TideisTurning (PSW) **What have you learnt from your experiences with lockdown?**
 iPhone I've improved my computer and phone skills a lot
 Shaz51 catching up with things that needed to be done , slowing down , yes , some much needed self care , drinking lots more coffee @TideisTurning (PSW)

CalmingNature I've discovered some new activities that I love such as colouring in and sudoku puzzles. I have also learned the importance of connection and checking in with family and friends
 adge I start short-term 6 weeks Contract next Monday - Will be delivering hundreds of Paper Census Forms, & doing lots of Data Entry at home. Maybe visiting all these people makes me higher risk for catching Covid - At least I just had my 2nd Vaccination, so Hopefully okay....

Mex excellent adge

CalmingNature Thats fantastic to hear @adge
 The Hams good evening. Apologies I was held up.

CalmingNature I can relate to drinking lots of coffee @Shaz51 ! Self care is very important

CalmingNature Hi @The Hams , its great you've been able to join! What have you learned from lockdown?
 iPhone I live by a river so I can go walking if I feel like it. I didn't for a few lockdowns because I just felt like staying in but now I'm getting out more regularly.

CalmingNature That sounds very relaxing @iPhone , its good you've been able to get there more regularly
 iPhone I am going into tafe tomorrow for a class because they got an exemption so we could do a first aid course. It's such hard work actually going into tafe now I have experienced studying online.

CalmingNature Hi @lioness , welcome!
 lioness hi all ty for the welcome

CalmingNature What have you learnt from your experiences in lockdown @lioness ?
 lioness its been a major daily struggle but regular routine and keeping my family around helps me get through each day

The Hams What have I learned from Lockdown? That's a good question. Permit me to answer at length? I have learned a lot. Both good and bad. But I have also learned about myself, about society and about our

species. I've always known we are social creatures and have that side to us. I think that lockdown has tested that. Being separated from other people just generally is not good. But it's also hard being separated from those who we love, our friends and our families. I have learned that although family can test out patience, they are ultimately the ones we need. It reminds me of the Tim Minchin song White Wine in the Sun. I'm not too sure if i am able to send links in this chat? I think in terms of society I have learned that we are very quick to get angry about things. Whether it's a certain group in a certain area code or postcode of a certain city who are a bit different - they get demonised for spreading the virus. I don't accept this. I think it's just about messaging and how people get their information. I don't think there is any malice in it. IT's just a situation that happens because more and more people just don't get it. I think too many people profile. We are all hurting from lockdown and it's not normal to do this. There is a reason why we isolate people in jail as a punishment. In terms of what I have learned? I'm not sure my friend. I am still learning. All I can say is that I have found I am stronger that I thought and that I am continually trying my best and maybe this is all that's asked of me.

The Hams

CalmingNature

oh dear. That's quite long. I'm sorry hahaha

@lioness Its great that you've got your family around. I found keeping routine was very helpful for me as well!

TideisTurning (PSW)

adge

You can send links if you'd like @The Hams. Great song! :)

Yes @The Hams

TideisTurning (PSW)

Have you learned anything helpful from others' experiences here tonight that you might be able to apply in your own life? If yes, what was it that you took away?

CalmingNature

@The Hams I also never really understood how social the human species is until lockdown, I definitely took face-to-face interactions for granted before hand!

Mex

adge

https://youtu.be/_rArKNW03-4

I have noticed that innocent people are being Immediately Blamed - Which explains why the WA Gvnt Site was Very Clear to Point out that the last person who was Contagious here, did All the Right Things....

Mex

iPhone

it the link to coronavirus rhapsody

I cold try a puzzle as I have a big table that I cold use. I never thought that I would enjoy that but it's not a bad idea.

TideisTurning (PSW) Tonight's topic could have brought up some uncomfortable feelings as we talked about strong feelings and mental health struggles. Would some self-care be helpful for you after we finish? If so, what might you do?

Otter (Moderator) Amazing post @The Hams - it made me reflect on how we can slip into judging others easily sometimes without realising when we're scared or stressed, and also how scary we can find it personally to reach out and connect at those times without realising

The Hams here's that song I mentioned - white wine in the sun
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_CeY0VdhXK8

iPhone My dinner is just about ready so I'm eating roast chicken and veggies as self care

The Hams Agreed @Otter today an old lady asked me for directions to a place. I wanted to make sure that it was clear and she got to where she needed. Human kindness is under rated.

Mex it's a pandemic not a famine

The Hams sounds good @iPhone hope you enjoy it !

TideisTurning (PSW) I'm hearing a lot of you feeling isolated this evening have been feeling isolated and lonely. If you'd be interested, SANE also has a 1:1 peer support service to connect with a peer support worker who has lived experience of complex mental health issues. This service is available via email, webchat or book a call between 10am-4pm Monday to Friday. If you'd like to know more, head here <https://www.sane.org/peer-support>

Mex there will be some really good cooks around after all the lockdowns

CalmingNature I've gained some new ideas surrounding activities I can do to fight lockdown boredom. After this chat I'm going to journal to reflect on the conversation we have all had tonight and what I have learned from the conversation with a nice cup of tea. I'm feeling more positive surrounding this lockdown after this conversation and I am grateful for everyone's contributions!

TideisTurning (PSW) We'd also like to invite you to complete a survey reflecting on your experience in this Peer Group Chat. We'd love to hear any feedback you may have! It will only take a few minutes to complete - please click this link:
https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW

TideisTurning (PSW) Here are some further resources on coping with lockdown you might like to have a look at:
<https://www.abc.net.au/everyday/managing-mental-health-in-new-covid-lockdown/100169688>

<https://www.actmindfully.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FACE-COVID-eBook-by-Russ-Harris-March-2020.pdf>

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/news/your-personal-mental-health-check-in-for-lockdown/>

adge

Thanks @TideisTurning - Thanks @CalmingNature

adge

Thanks everyone.

The Hams

Onwards we go friends.

iPhone

Thanks you

TideisTurning (PSW)

Thank you everyone for joining, and we hope you enjoyed the discussion. If you'd like to be informed when our next Peer Group Chat will be taking place, you can sign up to our mailing list here <https://www.sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat>. You can also ask a question for our next topic, where we'll be talking about Creating & Keeping Routines, and you can read the transcripts of all our previous topics too

Otter (Moderator)

Thanks heaps, it was inspiring and encouraging guys. Keep on keeping on and connecting :)

TideisTurning (PSW)

Go gently and remember, you are not alone :)

The Hams

sometimes i remember the stoic principle of non permanence - where things, no matter what they are, will cease

Shaz51

thank you @TideisTurning (PSW)

Mex

This too will pass... it might pass like a kidney stone, but it will pass

The Hams

"this too shall pass"

Mex

Thanks everyone, have a good night

Otter (Moderator)

Thanks for a good laugh at the end there Mex

CalmingNature

Take care everyone and have a good night!

TideisTurning (PSW)

We'll be closing the room shortly everyone. Feel free to continue the discussion on the SANE Forums if you would like to :)

The Hams

Night all friends. Keep going and keep posting on the forum :)

iPhone

Thank you. Good night