

Life of a Quarantined EP (Educational Psychologist)

Life as we knew it has changed beyond recognition. Schools are closed for the foreseeable future, exams are cancelled and we are asked to work from home as much as possible and leave the house as infrequently as possible. The future is uncertain and that makes for unsettled living.

What does this look like for a psychologist who is used to supporting schools in a very hands-on and face to face way?

Initially, I found working from home very difficult. I am an extrovert by nature and like to see people and get feedback from their facial expressions and body language which is hard to do over the phone. I also found that little queries requiring instant feedback that I used to ask any colleague sitting in the office with me, I now had to find a new way - via email, WhatsApp, Google Hangouts.

Our team hurriedly put together useful documents for schools covering helpful websites for learning, mental health care and links to great offers such as Joe Wicks PE for Kids every morning or the free museum tours etc.

I have had to learn, very quickly, how to do remote meetings via video and have had some success, speaking to 4 other people in 4 other locations and only "dropping out" for a few minutes due to technical issues.

I have taken part in online training - some of it excellent, some of it less so, but have used those experiences to work out how I would like to deliver training in the future. I have been working with a colleague to adapt our face-to-face training into an online pre-recorded version which has been a huge challenge for which we have sought help from our local authority IT department.

Trying to work whilst simultaneously sharing the computer, internet, childcare, home schooling, dog walking, meal-providing with my husband has also been a challenge and I have become accustomed to frequent interruptions which is counteractive to focused concentration. I know others are having the same challenges as I hear babies crying in the back of other people's homes, children interrupting colleagues and pets joining in the video chats.

And we worry a lot. We worry about how to post our reports to families when we don't have envelopes and stamps at home. We worry about the pupils who are not in ideal home learning situations and could be a much greater danger in their homes. We worry about how we can deliver our service as effectively and as productively without actually leaving our homes.

The most useful thing I have found comes from Russ Harris (of The Happiness Trap) and his F.A.C.E.C.O.V.I.D document which reminds us to narrow our gaze to what we can control right in front of us and take pleasure in living in the moment. Now is the time that we have more space in our lives to reflect on what actually is important. Now is the time to realise how much we can live without. Stay at home. Protect the NHS. Save Lives.