Pandemic State of Mind

An Emotional Roadmap
for Lockdown & Beyond

By Rich Goddard
Collage by Alicia Reguera

Monday
State
of Mind

Pandemic State of Mind

Whether you're in full lockdown or wondering when the next one might come, the way 2020 has unfolded can easily feel just a little disconcerting - if not completely overwhelming.

If there was ever a time to start thinking about our mental health, now would probably be it. All this uncertainty and unexpected change, with all those undesirable emotions we generally do our best to avoid, can be a lot to take.

But, pandemic or not, dealing with difficult emotions is part of life. If we can deal with them now, we can take those lessons from lockdown and make them last a lifetime.

Whatever your current situation, this eBook is designed to help you deal with the ups and downs, focus on what's most important and put you in the best position to optimise your state of mind, through lockdown and beyond.

How to use this eBook

It's a simple format, which might take an hour to read all the way through if you wanted to, a couple of hours to read and do the exercises, or you can jump around and engage in whichever parts sound most appealing. For the exercises, download this spreadsheet to guide you.

Part 1: Articles & short essays

These articles are designed to apply to any point in life but are particularly relevant now:

Part 2: Exercises for building a routine

3 exercises, designed to be completed in number order using the spreadsheet provided:

About Rich Goddard

I'm a personal development coach and Editor of the Monday State of Mind newsletter – the weekly briefing of news, tech, tools and tips for maintaining mental wellbeing, in life and work.

This eBook is an expanded version of the handout guide for the Pandemic State of Mind workshops, which I've been running virtually with organisations around the world throughout lockdown.

For more on me, my coaching programmes, workshops and more, go to https://www.richgoddard.co/

Part 1: Articles & Short Essays

1. Dealing with Change in the New Normal

Humans, in general, are not particularly enthusiastic about unforeseen change and uncertainty. Partly just because we're lazy. If we're used to doing things a certain way, it just adds something else to think about which, frankly, we'd rather not.

But then there's also the emotional attachment to things we don't want to let go of. Or the loss of the control we'd built up within our previous "normal". And of course, the lack of belief that the "new normal" could be as good as the last.

I, for example, am not the only person who wasn't looking forward to having to stay at home in isolation when the great lockdown of 2020 first waded into our lives. I liked what I had before, it worked for me and I didn't want to let go of it.

Yet, after a few weeks – as for many others – I began to quite enjoy my new normal. I liked not having to think about my commute, FOMO or wearing trousers. I adapted, as many others did – *and just like we always do*.

Of course, some may read this and feel they never adapted to the new realities of pandemic living. But then there's the other cold, hard truth we often choose to ignore, when fixated on keeping things as they are; that change will come again, and again – *just like it always does.*

The constant new normal

Despite how much we tell ourselves that things stay the same, or should stay the same, the reality is that the only constant is change itself. It's that quote you've heard a million times, mostly because it's so accurate.

No matter how perfectly static our little lives may feel, absolutely nothing is. The earth is constantly spinning on its axis. Our laundry baskets are constantly filling. Our bodies are constantly growing, shrinking, vibrating and working away on a molecular level, in order just to keep us going.

Big changes don't appear from nowhere. They come in a tipping point, from the constant change that is always happening and evolving. Once we become more familiar with that and

accept it, then not only can we react differently when a major change comes, but we can maybe even see it coming before it does.

The change process

The good news is that the range of emotions we sometimes feel, when going through unexpected change or loss, are so common, there's even a psychological model for it. Developed in the 1960's, originally referring to the grieving process, the model is commonly referred to as the "change curve" and has since been adapted to refer to the feelings people go through in the face of any significant, unforeseen change.

The model explains the sequence of emotions we feel, from the shock of receiving whichever news of change, to a range of emotions from denial, anger and sadness, before accepting and adapting to the new normal.

It looks a little something like this:
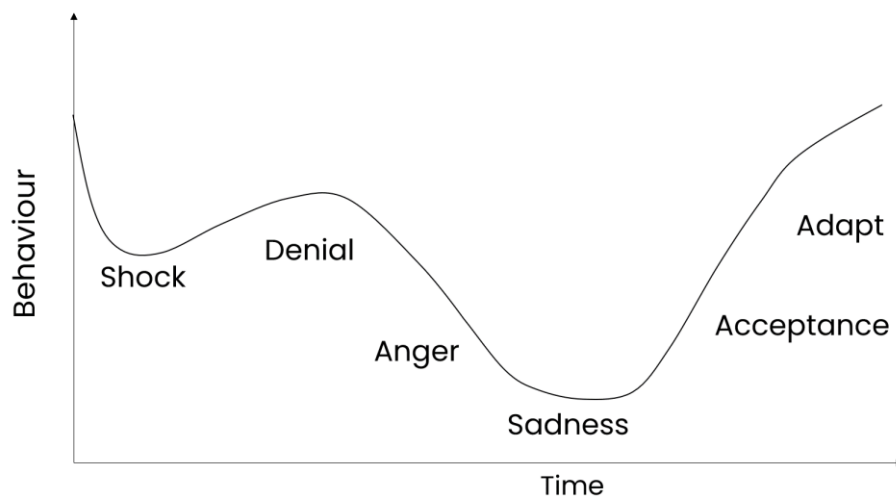
Adapted from the 5 Stages of Grief, Kübler-Ross, 1969

Of course, in reality, this smoothly defined curve can feel more like this:
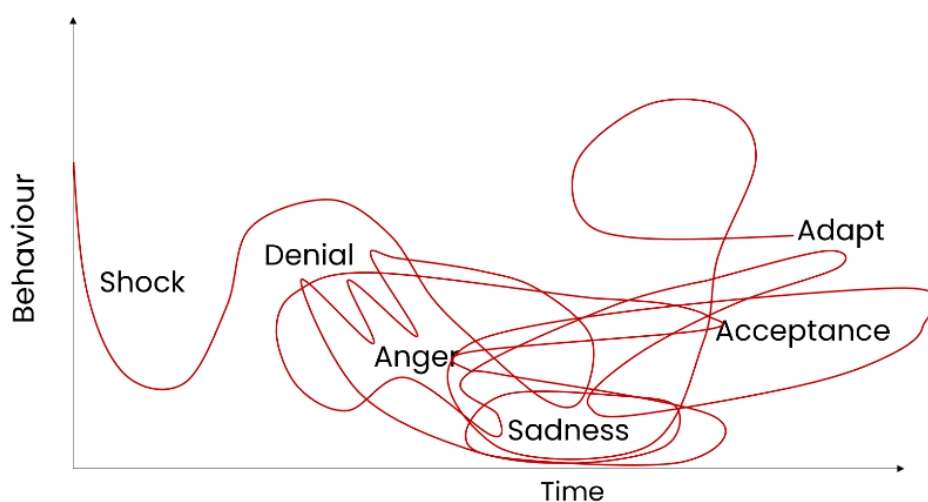
My brain, 2020

But, whether soaring the peaks and valleys or feeling like you just entered a brain blender, you'll notice that, in the end, the closer we get to accepting, the sooner we're able to adapt.

You may also notice how this could've applied to a previous change or loss in your life, like a relationship or career move. Maybe it could apply to elements of your lockdown – where something you dreaded brought about a rollercoaster of emotions, before you accepted it, adapted, survived and made the most of it – even if you're still caught up in that process now.

To our credit, we're very adaptable creatures. It's in our nature. We wouldn't exist if that wasn't the case. The only thing that gets in the way, is if we get too caught up in the denial, anger and sadness stage, rather than moving quicker to integrate, adapt and find solutions.

Of course, some things, from a moral perspective, we should fight to keep. The only problem comes when our fight to keep it has come too late. When we've been living under the incorrect assumption that things *won't* change, only to one day wake up to find out that they *do* and suddenly *have*; or that the world around us has been gradually shifting towards something we'd been neglecting.

So we should be aware of how much time we spend on resisting something which may be inevitable, when compared to time spent adapting to it.

Equally, in some instances, the emotions which come with this "grieving process" are simply necessary and we have to go through them. To try and explain to somebody that they should just accept the death of a loved one, for example, will not do anybody any favours.

But in many other circumstances, the denial, sadness and anger we feel are simply getting in the way of us adapting and making the most of whichever situation we now find ourselves in.

Focus on what you control

In a world where everything around us can feel like it's spiralling out of control, it can be easy to feel out of control ourselves. There's so much going on, consuming our minds and attention, we can end up focusing more on those things, outside of our control, than on those within it, doing nothing but adding to the frustration, anger and sadness.

Focusing on what we control puts us into a position of power to adapt and make the most of whichever situation. Instead of blaming other people for creating a situation, we focus on ourselves and what we can do to improve it. Instead of wishing it wasn't happening, we accept that it is and focus on what we can control to adapt. Instead of worrying about what might happen, we focus on doing what we can do make the most of whatever does. The following article goes into this in more detail.

Tomorrow is another day

In a world that was already changing at an unprecedented rate, maybe "settling into the new normal" is less about trying to make things stay a certain way and more about becoming comfortable that change is always happening. Learning to accept, in order to adapt.

But another bi-product of accepting that change is constant, is to know that the outcome of one change can easily lead somewhere completely different.

One of the reasons people fear change is because our brains are hardwired to look for things that'll cause us harm. So we instinctively look for worst case scenarios and focus our attention on those. Once again, it's a trait which has worked splendidly for our survival throughout evolution, but possibly less so for our mental health in the 21st century.

As change is always happening, we can never be sure that what seems to be bad – or good – will turn out that way eventually. While it's important to acknowledge where things can go wrong, we must also be open to other possibilities, in order to move towards them.

None of us can know what tomorrow might bring. But for as long as we open ourselves up to the realm of possibilities and focus on the things within our control, we put ourselves in the best position possible to make the most of it – no matter what's happening around us.

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Feedback & share

Please feel free to email rich@richgoddard.co with thoughts and feedback – and of course, please share the web page with anybody who might find it useful, through these links:

2. Taking control in a crisis

We've all done it.

A plan falls apart, so we look for who to blame instead of taking responsibility. We lose what we had, so dwell on it and wallow in what went wrong, instead of embrace what we have now.

It's the classic mistake of focusing on the things over which we have little or no control – like other people, the past, or hypothetical events which haven't happened yet; instead of the things over which we do - like ourselves, the present, or – well, actual real stuff that exists.

When faced with a challenge, or something difficult that needs to be solved, the first thing we do is focus on everything but solving it. On the surface, our brains like to think that playing victim or relieving ourselves of responsibility is a good thing. At times, in the past, it's probably helped.

But, in truth, this is an illusion which does more harm than good. Focusing our attention on things we have little or no control over, instead of on the things we do, can easily become the root cause of further frustration, anxiety and sadness; not to mention, severe inefficiency and nothing ever going as we want it to.
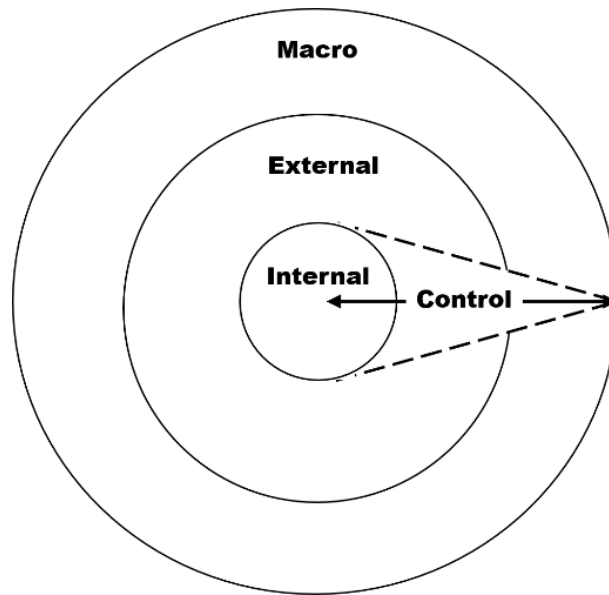
The layers of control

In any given situation, there are certain things we can control, certain things we can't. Then there's a load of other stuff in between, over which we have varying control. I like to divide them into three areas:

Macro-environment: The greater habitat in which we find ourselves - from global affairs to a family or place of work – our wider surroundings, which might be difficult or impossible to leave, or over which control is very limited for most within it.

External environment: The immediate elements around us, from people to physical things, structures or routines, over which we have some control.

Internal environment: Our beliefs, behaviours and reactions; which can be externally influenced, but over which, of all the layers, we have the most control.

Here's a handy visual guide:

Macro

External

Internal   **Control**

Being aware of the different layers is important in knowing where to focus our time and energy - primarily because, the further we go outside of those layers, the less control we have and the more time we waste in acting like we do.

Focusing on the inner circles allow us to see what we can do, within our capability, power and immediate vicinity, to improve our lives, situation and perhaps even those of the people around us.

And the fun part is – the more we focus on the inner layers, the more they will affect the outer. *"Be the change"* and all that. Something like this:

Macro

External

Internal
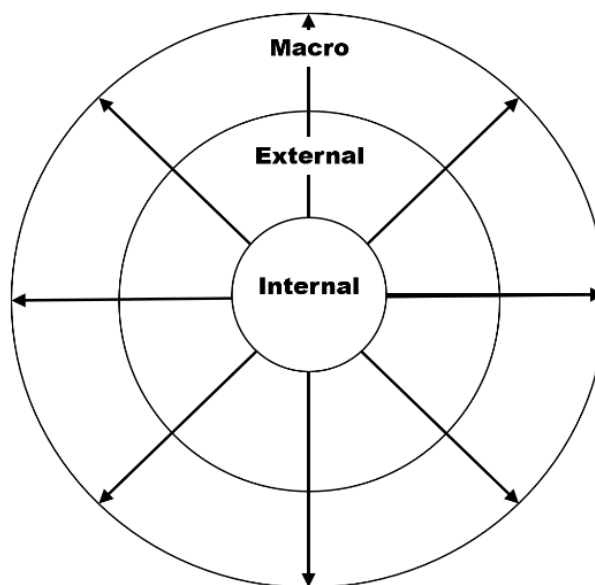
Applying the layers to life in 2020

In a global crisis, we can approach the situation just as we would any other - by acknowledging what's happening and focusing on the things within our power to improve it, for ourselves and those around us.

Below are some thoughts and ideas for taking control of pandemic life. Depending on which stage of lockdown you're in, some of these will be more relevant than others. But whichever way, they give practical examples of how the different layers can be applied to what's happening in the world today.

Macro-Environment

Aside from a small section of the global community, the vast majority of us have very little control over the macro-environment of a viral pandemic. But, as always, we do play a role.

For example, in a world so closely connected, our virality is not only biological, but social. So not only can we take responsibility for how we spread disease, by washing our hands, wearing masks and "elbow-bumping"; but how we spread information and impact others, by being conscious of what we share on social media, compassionate with those around us or not buying all the toilet paper.

Ultimately, there's little that most people can do about the macro-environment. But what we do within the inner layers can contribute towards it…

External Environment

Once we stop blaming politicians, society or our boss, it really is incredible how much more control we can have, over our lives, happiness and the immediate world around us.

Within the era of Covid chaos, there's a lot happening outside of our control, throwing our lives into disarray. So it's down to us to work with what we have and take control of it. Some examples might include:

Wellbeing: OK, the gym isn't quite what it used to be. But there are other ways to exercise, while sleep and diet are still very much up to us to look after – all of which have an impact on how we feel.. See Exercise 1 in Part 2 for more ideas.

Adapting to a digital world…while maintaining separation: The world was already going increasingly digital, opening up various opportunities while also giving us an extra reason to be glued to our screens. Embracing digital change in the new normal means making the most of it while having clear boundaries (see Exercise 2, Part 2 for more).

Distant socialising: whichever stage of lockdown you're in, finding time and ways to connect with people releases all types of happy chemicals in the brain. Now is the time to stay connected to the people who make us feel good, in whichever way we can.

Have an evolving routine: When everything else feels chaotic and uncertain, having a routine brings a level of certainty. But people and situations always change, so allow for it to evolve. Equally, when we're mostly stuck within the same four walls, variety in routine can keep things fresh.. See Exercise 3, in Pt 2, on how to build yours.

Find opportunities in crisis: The ultimate in focusing on what you control. When all seems to be crumbling around us, what can be built from the rubble?

Internal Environment

The internal environment is about how we think, behave, react to our emotions. It's easier for some to maintain than others. But no matter how difficult, the average person has more control over these than the outer layers.

Here are some suggestions for how to gain that control:

Find your quiet mind: Meditation might not be for everyone. But whether going for a walk with no phone, doing something creative or having a candle-lit bath, put aside time to focus on whatever it is that brings inner-silence.

Reflect: Our heads are constantly filled with a million thoughts, looping around in a non-sensical whirlwind in our minds. Take a moment to separate them and get them out of your head, by writing them down or speaking them out loud to someone.

Embrace the little things: It's no major surprise that taking time to focus on the things in life that we're grateful for, big or small, has been proven to make us feel happier. We live in a world of constant reminders of the things we should have, but don't. Don't believe the hype.

Talk about it: Find someone in your life who you can speak to about how you're feeling. If you don't have that, try a coach or therapist. If not, check out some of the resources at the end of this eBook.

Budget for your emotions: Now is the time to get familiar with the emotions we've been avoiding this whole time. See the next article for more on how to do so.

Accept & adapt: As per article 1, if something is truly out of our control, the moment we accept it, is the moment we can adapt and thrive within it. Those who will come out stronger are not those who resisted, but those who adapted quickest – and that starts with acceptance.

Know what works for you

The exercises in Part 2 focus on how to delve into the inner circles of your layers of control, to find what works for you and create a routine from it. Take a look for ideas, inspiration and tools to help.
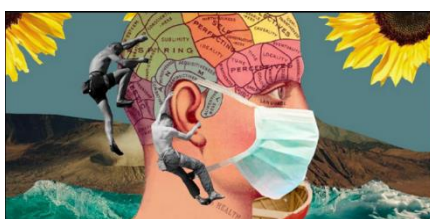
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3. Budget for your emotions

Across the world, an ongoing feature in an average life is the continuous outflow of financial expenses. In turn, we make ongoing considerations in how we approach those expenses – building up cash reserves, spending within our means, planning ahead and budgeting.

When dealing with the ups and downs of 21st century life, the other ongoing, daily cost we incur, is when we dip into the overdrafts of our minds and spend some cold, hard emotions. Yet, despite the constant outflow of our limited emotional resources, we put little effort into planning around them.

In budgeting our finances, we look ahead and anticipate costs, so we can prepare for them happening and make sure they don't hit too hard when they do. Even the most disorganised spreadsheet-phobes, at some point, have had to think ahead about where money is coming from and going to; perhaps in a work project, saving for a big purchase, or just being able to survive and pay rent in a major city.

In doing so, not only can we work around those costs, but it just doesn't feel as bad when they hit. For example, nobody likes paying rent. For most people, it's the biggest expense we make on one item, in any given month. But in knowing and accepting it, it's not a particular shock to the financial system – let alone to our emotions – when it comes.

So what about doing the same for how we feel?

Planning ahead

I'd like to propose we start budgeting a little better for our emotions, in a similar way we do with our finances. To stop pretending they're not coming, be aware of when they might come and mitigate the impact of them, when they do.

We don't need spreadsheets for this. Just an awareness. If we book a holiday, for example, we're aware we'll budget financially, or at least anticipate that we'll spend a certain amount of money each day. This means we need to take a certain amount away with us in total, even if it's just a loose estimate.

What we don't budget for is the endearingly termed "post-holiday blues" that come from going straight back to work the morning after we get back. So what could we put aside for that?

Looking ahead, giving it some thought or perhaps drawing on previous experience, we might anticipate that it can feel a bit intense to fly back on Sunday night/Monday morning and go straight into work to a barrage of emails.

So, depending on our circumstances, we might book an extra half-day holiday, or block out a morning to catch up on emails. Maybe we book something nice for ourselves for our first week back at home, as something to look forward to once we're back - instead of hiding under a duvet, wishing we were back where we were last week.

During intermittent lockdown, we may look ahead and see we're scheduled to be home-schooling on the same day as a client pitch, or anything which, if given some thought, we know will be emotionally draining. In which case, we can look into practical ideas to ease the workload, while also making sure we've been doing all we can to ease the load on our minds.

If we know there could be challenging times ahead, but we fail to mitigate the costs of the emotions that come with them, then we just end up feeling worse and spending more negative emotions when they come. It's like pretending we don't have to pay our bills, so we don't put any money aside for them…then we just get fined even more for not paying them.

	A	B	C
1	Emotional Budget June 2020		
2	Event	Poss emotions	Actions to mitigate
3	Jun-01		
4	Project deadline	🤔 😁 😫	Get 1st draft done Friday, exe
5	Zoom with friends	😊 😍 😂	-
6	Homeschooling kids all morning	🤓 🤗 🤦	Get materials prepared
7	Contingency	😭 🤬 😫	See routine
8	Jun-02		

Putting something aside for a rainy day

Besides the expected costs on the horizon, it's worth also acknowledging that there might be some unexpected difficult emotions stemming from surprise challenges that arise, seemingly from nowhere; rather than hoping and wishing they don't come and beating ourselves up over it, when they do.

As any budget pro will tell you, the tightest of budgets will have a contingency; ie, a separate amount put aside, just in case, for those unforeseen circumstances. Because there will always be unexpected financial costs cropping up from time to time.

If we're ready for them, the impact will be far less when they do; and if we get through it without any additional costs, there's the additional bonus of some leftover cash.

By having a contingency for our emotions, all it means is we accept that surprises and bad days might happen. It just is what it is. We may feel stressed, angry, sad or anxious and we just didn't see it coming.

But accepting that difficult emotions may unexpectedly arise, allows us to just let them happen and look calmly at the small steps we can take to deal with the situation that' caused them; rather than experiencing a shock to the system and allowing it to spiral out of control.

Setting your own budget

It's difficult to quantify and measure emotions. But we can still become more aware of when they may arise, plan around them and accept them when they come, in order to make the whole process a little easier to deal with.

So look ahead. What's coming up on your horizon? Anything potentially stressful? Anything that'll require a lot of your energy? Anything you're already feeling anxious about?

If so, budget for the emotions that will come with it by making sure you're in the best possible mindset. Think about sleep, diet, exercise and the different elements of the routine we've been discussing.

Plan to take some time out - either before or after aforementioned emotionally demanding activity - to breathe, prepare, decompress, reflect, have some downtime or give your mind some peace. If you can't plan, just become more aware and accepting that bad days can happen, there'll be difficult emotions that come with them and those emotions are always changing.

There'll always be times when we might feel stressed, worried or generally a bit low. Accepting that's the case and knowing there are things you can do, within your control, to soften the blow, can help to take the edge off and give a clearer mind with which to improve the situation.

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Feedback & share

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Part 2: Exercises: Building a routine

This section and the following three exercises are designed to help you identify exactly what it is that works for you, personally, build a routine around it to stick to as best you can.

Each has an introduction and provides some ideas and insights for the exercises; or, you can jump straight to the end of each to the exercises themselves, and fill in this spreadsheet designed to guide you.

To make the most of it, complete all three exercises in a row, with #1 and #2 building towards #3.

4: Find what works for you

While there's no magic formula for boosting everybody's mental health, there are certain considerations which are proven to make a difference to the average person's. The goal of this exercise is for you to explore these factors – to reflect on your experiences and identify what's worked for you, or against you, personally.

To do so, we'll explore 8 key considerations in maintaining wellbeing::
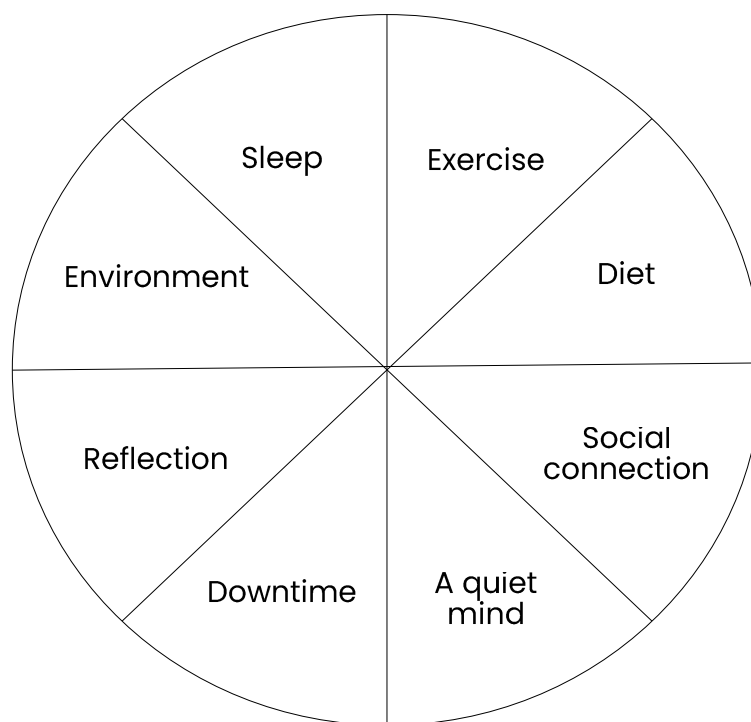
There are, of course, other external factors which can impact our state of mind – life situations like work, finances and relationships. But these are those, generally within our control, to which we can make minor tweaks to improve how we feel,

To elaborate on these, below are some further descriptions, with links to more info and examples of the types of answers you might give in the spreadsheet. Depending on which stage of lockdown we might be in, our approach to them will differ. But at any point in our lives, they are always relevant and important to consider.

1) Sleep

Different people require different amounts of sleep, to be able to perform at their best. Some could sleep through an earthquake, while others stare at the ceiling all night. **In your experience, how much sleep do you need? What's your optimum sleep time? What makes you sleep better or worse?** To explore further, here's some more on the relationship between sleep and mental health, with some tips on how to improve it and some of the best apps for a good night's sleep.		
Examples		
What feels good?	*What feels bad?*	*What could I try?*
e.g 8 hours, bed by 11pm	*Working until I sleep*	*Bedtime yoga routine*

2) Exercise

Our physical health and mental health are directly connected. Regular exercise is proven to play a role in how we feel emotionally and mentally, whether that be training for a marathon or taking a walk around the block. **What type of exercise do you find most engaging? What time of day does your life, work or body allow it?** Read more on exercise and mental health, advice for exercising during lockdown and some of the best fitness apps.		
What feels good?	*What feels bad?*	*What could I try?*
e.g 15 min run, 3 times a week	*Not leaving my home all day*	*A new fitness app*

3) Diet

The food we eat impacts our physical health and, in turn, our mental health – effecting energy levels and mood, depending on what we eat and when, throughout the day. **What are your snacking habits? When time of day do you eat? How's your alcohol or coffee consumption?** Read more on how diet can affect mental health, including nutritional tips on eating consciously to improve how you feel,		
What feels good?	*What feels bad?*	*What could I try?*
e.g A light, early dinner	*Sugary snacks*	*Not drinking coffee after 1pm*

4) Connection: Distant socialising

We're all on different points of the introvert-extrovert scale. But humans are social creatures and social connection releases all kinds of happy chemicals in our brains. **When and how can you find time to connect with friends, family or the people you care about?** Read more on keeping online chat with friends interesting, and if it's all becoming too much, some tips to combat Zoom fatigue.		
What feels good?	*What feels bad?*	*What could I try?*
e.g Call with friends/ family every 2 days	*Group Zooms*	*Texting someone I care about in the morning*

5) A quiet mind

Meditation has been shown many times to have a positive impact on mental health. But it's not for everyone. Making your mind go quiet could mean something else – like going for a walk with no phone, painting or listening to music.

What is it for you? Which activities let you focus and lessen the internal chatter in your head?

Some of the best meditation apps to work with, if that's your thing.

What feels good?	What feels bad?	What could I try?
e.g Meditation, going for a walk, music	*Obsessing over breaking news*	*Something creative*

6) Downtime

Screw the mindfulness and self-development for a minute. Sometimes I just want to crack open some wine and watch Netflix or go down a youtube rabbit hole. Or, read, have a bath, scroll through Instagram.

What do you like to do which requires zero focus or effort?

What feels good?	What feels bad?	What could I try?
e.g Reading, movies, video games	*Instagram stories*	*Scheduling a work finish time*

7) Reflection

In a world usually going at a million miles per hour, reflection of some kind allows us to see things for what they are and not get bogged down in our thoughts; like keeping a daily journal or writing a few things to be grateful for, before going to sleep.

How do you deal with your thoughts? Do you communicate them with people, or by writing or thinking?

More on journaling and gratitude lists.

What feels good?	What feels bad?	What could I try?
e.g Reading, movies, video games	*Instagram stories*	*Scheduling a work finish time*

8) Environment

A tidy environment is a tidy mind. Particulary when living and working in the same place, it's even more important to consider the space we spend most of our time in.

How is your living or working space? What around you allows you a clear head?

More on setting up your work environment, and how our physical environment affects our mental health.

What feels good?	What feels bad?	What could I try?
e.g Reading, movies, video games	*Instagram stories*	*Scheduling a work finish time*

Exercise #1: Find what works for you

The 8 factors to consider are:

Sleep
Exercise
Diet
Social connection
A quiet mind
Downtime
Reflection
Environment

Download the spreadsheet, take a look at tab #1 and fill in with these:

1) Consider how well you maintain each of the factors. You may even rate them out of 10 (e.g 1 for bad / 5 for OK / 10 for champion)

2) Think back to the things you know have made you feel good, or not so good, during this period and write them into the within the given categories.

If possible, try to think of at least one thing for each; or even better, one thing you've noticed that's worked for you, one thing that's worked against, and one thing you could try and see how it feels (see the boxes above for examples, or Rich's routine in Tab 4 of the spreadsheet).

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In the 21st century, our dependency with technology has made us almost inseparable from our devices. The programmers behind our apps use a range of incredibly clever techniques to keep us coming back for more, so it's up to us to consciously step in and intervene.

Breaking habits isn't easy, but there are small things we can do to start taking ownership of our time and tech, instead tech owning us and our time.

The ideas below can help to both ensure we aren't susceptible to the negative impacts of tech over-consumption, but also to simply help remind us that we are in control. I've divided them into 5 sections. They are:

1. **Time:** Allocating certain times to use tech, when it suits you best
2. **Device:** Putting a barrier between you and your devices
3. **Content:** Awareness of the types of content you consume and how it affects you
4. **Relationships:** How you communicate with other people about your tech habits
5. **You own habits and boundaries:** Acknowledging your own habits

1. Own your time	2. Own your devices	3. Own your content
Digital-free periods: Putting time into your calendar for when you will or will not use tech. **Specific times for specific tech:** Using certain apps or devices at the best times for it, e.g only scrolling Instagram or TikTok in the evenings so not to ruin your daytime productivity. **Turn phone on flight mode overnight:** Setting a time at which to disconnect; then in the morning, give your brain a minute to wake up by not switching it back on until after breakfast or a shower. **Fast**: During lockdown I did a 24 hour disconnect. As horrific as it may sound to some people, it honestly felt like a holiday retreat without leaving my home. A complete disconnect allows you to focus on enjoying the present moment, whether alone or with others.	**Switch off phone notifications:** So simple, but it works. Go into your settings and switch off the notifications you don't need. Take that, algorithms. **Remove icons from home screen:** Just as simple. Even the additional 10 seconds it takes to scroll past your homepage and find the Twitter button gives you time to say "hang on – do I *really* want to do this?" **Use blocker apps:** There are apps you can plug into your phone or browser to restrict you from using certain applications or websites at certain times. Here's a list of some of the best ones. **Create a physical distance:** Putting your phone in another room overnight can once again create a separation. If possible, leaving the work laptop in a different place to where you relax can have a similar effect.	**Be aware of news consumption:** This Covid stuff is fascinating and it's important to keep up to date. But the constant flow of "Breaking News" isn't always necessary, nor does it make us particularly happy. Keep news consumption it to a healthy or necessary level. **Recognise how apps make you feel:** Sometimes scrolling through Instagram stories is fine. But for many, the FOMO builds up. Different apps bring different emotions. So observe them and be aware of what such content is doing for you. **Choose your procrastination apps:** We all like to be mindless from time to time. But some methods of doing that can be better for us than others. Maybe playing games or Words With Friends would be a better default procrastinator than Facebook.
4. Own your relationships		

The digital world makes us more accessible to people in the physical world. With this in mind – and particularly at work – communicating with people about when you'll be

available, or what you'd like your digital habits to be, will set their expectations and give you some peace of mind in not feeling like you need to respond to their 9pm email.
5. Own your habits
Of course, as is the case with the aforementioned layers of control, the core focus should be on yourself – your own habits, behaviours, reactions. So, first just become aware of them. If the email does come in at 9pm, which isn't urgent – how do you respond?

Exercise #2: What are your tech habits?

To once again start to better understand your habits, what works for you and what doesn't, start to identify and list some of the things you've been doing, or which you could be doing, to take back ownership of your relationship with tech.

Use the spreadsheet provided as a guide to work with, in tab #2.

If possible, for each of the categories, try to think of either (a) something that's worked for you, (b) something that hasn't been good for you – and, based on the tips above, (c) something new that you could try. Those categories were:

#########

Feedback & share

Please feel free to email rich@richgoddard.co with thoughts and feedback – and of course, please share the web page with anybody who might find it useful, through these links:

6: Know your routine

In times when so much is happening which is out of our control, creating structure from the things we can control provides a level of stability, certainty and reassurance.

Having a routine can mean different things to different people and we can use them in whichever way works best for us. Ironically, I'm not really a *routine kind of guy*. In fact, I don't have a static routine, as such. I've just spent years trying things out, seeing what works and realising that how I feel can be significantly impacted by little actions I take at certain points in my day. I just kept doing it until I realised, actually, *I kind of have a routine*.

But no matter how much of it I stick to, just knowing what works gives me something to aim towards when I need it.:

My routine (or at least, the stuff I've found to work for me)

In tab #4 of the spreadsheet, I've included some of the activities and habits I try to fit into my day and week. Don't be intimidated by this mammoth list – again, **I don't do this every day.**

I go through phases of sticking to it or not – and that's fine. It's just a guide of what works for me, specifically, to which I can refer if I need to and do the best I can.

Equally, again, this list didn't just appear from nowhere. I started small and worked things up, which I'd suggest for anyone. So, take the pressure off and do what works for you.

I put a particular focus on morning and night – the transitional periods that can set you up for the whole day or for a good night's sleep. Alongside every point, I've given which category – as laid out in exercise 1.

How to approach a routine

There's no need to feel intimidated by a routine. Just give it your best. Here are some tips to get started:

Start small and achievable: If you're currently doing no exercise, aiming to wake up an hour earlier every day to do a triathlon, might be a little ambitious. A couple of 10 minute runs and a daily walk might be a more achievable place to start, before moving on.

Work to an initial timeline, then review: In the same vein, planning to suddenly change your habits forever might be a bit daunting. Promising to stick with it for a month, then go from there, might feel more doable.

Focus on the core components: Looking at my routine, for example, there are some things which are a "nice to do" and others which I know have a significant impact. Focus on latter,

Allow it to evolve: I'm always testing and experimenting with different things, changing my timeframes, durations, lengths or quantities. As we'll discuss, everything is constantly changing, in ourselves and the world around us. So we should allow for that, rather than give up if something isn't working.

Take the pressure off: Well, I did say this might come up again...so just do your best. If you have a bad day, or week, that's fine. It happens. Accept it and just promise yourself to give it another go tomorrow.

Exercise #3: Create your routine

Taking what you have from the above exercises, use the 3rd tab in this spreadsheet to start outlining what your ideal routine would be.

Once again, there is no pressure here. At minimum, the idea is to simply identify what your ideal routine would look like. At best, you can use this spreadsheet to keep track of how well you're doing, review at the end of each week and look at ways you can improve.
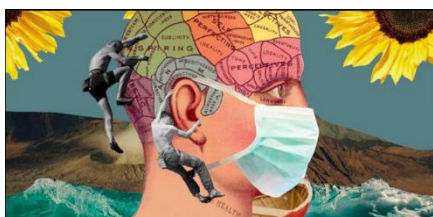
Keep it going: Services, links & resources

Hopefully you gained some insights from reading this and doing the exercises. I fully encourage you to keep going and exploring. Work on the spreadsheet exercises and, if you'd like help in going any further with this, for you or your organisation, here's how I can help:

Workshops

This eBook is an expanded version of the handout guide for the Pandemic State of Mind workshop, which I've been presenting virtually to teams and organisations around the world throughout lockdown.

The workshop can be presented as a standalone, 50 minute, interactive presentation, or as a series of 5 "Lessons from Lockdown". I generally present on Zoom (but can work with any video conferencing platform) and this has been adapted to small teams of 5 to companies and departments of hundreds.

To learn more or book for your organisation, contact me at rich@richgoddard.co

Coaching

I'm a certified Personal Development and Business Coach, working with individuals and organisations to help people optimise their minds in life and work. See more on my website.

If you'd like to book a free 15 minute consultation, contact me at rich@richgoddard.co

Monday State of Mind

MSOM is the weekly e-newsletter briefing on what business and technology are doing for mental health and wellbeing – and what we can do for our own. Receive the latest news, tech, tips and tools for optimising mental wellbeing in work, life, lockdown and beyond. Lovingly curated by me, every Monday.

Sponsorship and bespoke "Staff Briefing" newsletters available. See more and subscribe here.

Other useful services

Here's also a list of apps and services which are free or discounted during lockdown. For other, ongoing mental health support, helplines, webchat and other on-demand services, see:

NHS website (UK)
Mental Health America (USA)
United for Global Mental Health (International)

Feedback & share

Please feel free to email rich@richgoddard.co with thoughts and feedback – and of course, please share the web page with anybody who might find it useful, through these links: