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The Big C: life in lockdown from an Autism Spectrum perspective

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The world is upside down right now in a very short space of time. Everything is cancelled or postponed, nearly everything is shut, there's this eerie atmosphere and there's queues and tape all over the supermarket. Oh and there's a lack of pasta on the shelves.

Routines are generally out of whack. Basically neurotypical people are experiencing just what autistic life is like. For people on the autism spectrum this is exaggerated tenfold not just due to autism but due to some things related to autism. Think of it like how a computer has blue screened. I don't want to mention the big C because it's everywhere! Suddenly behaviours which were weird are now considered necessary!

It's okay to not be okay

So you can't keep to your routine, you can't see the people you're close to and worst of all the things you were looking forward to have been postponed. A lot of people in general are not ok right now and it's okay to feel like that. It's okay to feel like people give you barely any personal space, it's okay to feel disappointed that you have to wait to watch football again and it's ok to miss your set routines. Eventually things will get back to normal. It's ok to get frustrated at people for not giving you alone time and it's ok to be annoyed that you're unable to stick to food routines.

Ok everything is upside down what now?

There's barely been much advice about what to do with people on the spectrum in general. While these things haven't 100% worked with me they have kind of helped me at least. Maybe they help you.

1. Keep a routine

Ok work and social clubs are cancelled but what you can put into routine is a bit of a help. Set aside time for certain things each day or week.

2. Remember to get dressed and keep hygiene

Staying at home doesn't mean slacking on hygiene. Getting dressed and generally putting yourself together sets you in a different more ready to work mindset. Showering and washing your hair helps. And please **wash your hands**.

3. Keep connected

If possible try and set up group chats (either voice or text) and check in on people. If you're able to try and set up games together or maybe a group watch of something.

4. Positive news

The media often plays up the doom and gloom of the entire big C situation which really plays up on anxiety and the threat of further lockdown. It's not easy to shut off the news but there's positive news feeds that are good. It is difficult to shut everything off about the big C because often we like to be as informed as possible. The Happy Broadcast is such a news feed and will often have a section of positive stories.

5. Yes you can spend time outside

If you keep relatively close to where you live (don't drive) keep to social distancing regulations and don't cause a ruckus it's fine to take a walk, run or bike ride. The majority of people are keeping to distancing regulations it's just a select few people.

6. Keep a private journal

Sometimes it helps to write your feelings down. Either write in a book, use the notes app on your phone or download a journaling app. I sometimes add pictures and my drawings into the journal as well.

7. Plan for the future

I have a list of what I plan to do once everyone doesn't mention the big C every waking moment. Some of it may be a while away but simple things like planning a visit to McDonalds, seeing friends, going to the shop and buying something special or planning a holiday.

8. Uncertainty

Everything is uncertain but the main thing is when will this be over. People keep asking and asking but what were original dates set in place can be moved further and further back. Experts would either spread fear originally but as we find out more about the big C people are able to give a much more realistic approach of a timeline even if we have to make some changes to our lives.

9. Make someone smile

Either by sharing something you think is pretty good or whatever means necessary do it.

10. Useful links and apps

Group chat / streaming apps



Skype <https://www.skype.com/en/>



Discord <https://discordapp.com>



Zoom <https://zoom.us>



Telegram <https://telegram.org>

Positive News Outlet

The Happy Broadcast <https://www.thehappybroadcast.com>

Journaling App



Day One <https://dayoneapp.com>

Autistica - autism research charity

AUTISTICA <https://www.autistica.org.uk>

- Read an article about the impact of the virus for autistic employees:

<https://www.autistica.org.uk/news/impacts-of-covid-19-for-autistic-employees>

- Read about coping strategies for people on the spectrum:

<https://www.autistica.org.uk/get-involved/world-autism-awareness-month/my-ways-to-cope>

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