



Strategies for dealing with the Covid-19 lockdown: For individuals & businesses

7 April 2020

The coronavirus is still a big feature of our lives. Most people are still working from home, if working at all. Businesses, and especially small businesses are panicking if they cannot operate and are counting the cost of not being able to conduct business. Most of us are starting to get really fed up with being locked down at home. It is a horrible time. For some it is an inconvenience, yet for others it is incredibly frightening because they already have serious health issues, or they are watching their businesses that they worked so hard to build up lose revenue on a daily basis, or they are looking at the economy and thinking there will be retrenchments when this is all over and they are likely to be affected by them. For many this is a really frightening time. Given this, what can you do to help yourself get through this time as best as possible.

For individuals:

1. Your health is everything. You can get another job. You can pay back loans. You can always rebuild your finances. But if your health is permanently damaged you will be limited going forward in your future. Look after your health. Follow all the rules for preventing yourself from contracting or spreading the virus. In addition pay attention to your overall health. Eat well, sleep well, manage your stress, do some exercise, and if you are battling then get some professional help. It is not necessary to stay in a state of panic and intense fear. There is help.
2. Stay in touch with people electronically. Reach out. Share stories and experiences and daily life. Isolation is good for preventing the virus from spreading, it is not good for your mental health. So make a point of proactively contacting people. You can have your coffee or drinks session online using a platform such as Zoom. Have a party online. Get your book club online. Have a wine tasting online.
3. If you have to work, then stick to your normal work schedule and hours.
4. If you can't work from home and you are not working, then consider learning a new skill – either one that makes you more marketable or something that you have always wanted to do. So many places are offering free education right now.
5. Maybe you can and need to take this lockdown period to rest. Perhaps your work is exhausting and this is a time for you to recharge yourself. If so, then read, watch movies, engage with other people, and do other fun things you might do on holiday, just do them remotely. Game

reserves are streaming live game drives on YouTube. Theatres are streaming concerts and shows online. You can tour galleries and museums online. There is no end to the things you can do online right now. Much of what you could do if you were on holiday you can do online now.

6. On the home page of my website (www.lifecoachingbusiness.co.za) near the top (under the first paragraph) I have links to a whole lot of resources to support you – including mental health support, fitness apps, online/virtual concerts, tours, sight-seeing.

For businesses:

1. I have a business and have run one for over ten years, so I know what this is doing to you. In the best of times running a business is hard, in times like this when you may be forced to shut down, it is beyond scary. It is okay to be scared and angry.
2. Research all the financial relief available. The financial institutions are offering help they have never offered before. Find out what you can benefit from by contacting your bank. There is relief for small businesses. Business Partners is managing the Rupert 1 Billion Rand fund. The banks are managing the Oppenheimer R1 billion pledge (SAFT), so talk to one of the big four banks about this. There is small business relief from the government, and SARS is making allowances they don't usually offer. On my website home page there are links to all these places offering financial support to small businesses, including sole proprietors. There are many places providing relief so ask around and research to make sure you are aware of all of them. Don't rely on word of mouth either. I have seen lots of people making comments about criteria and eligibility for relief which are simply not true. Go to the source. Phone the organisations. And don't wait. The sooner you put in your request the sooner they will be able to assist you.
3. As per last week's newsletter, get the emotions out. Get angry and get your anger out. Cry if you need to. It actually will help you. Once you get the emotions out, you can start thinking about a way forward. Cry, scream, yell, punch the pillows or a punchbag, and express those emotions. Just don't damage any people or property while doing so. Expressing emotions is good and appropriate, but do so in a way that no one gets harmed, including yourself.
4. Then think about your business. Often we don't get time to think because we are so busy doing. If you have the time, use it to really think about your business. Are there aspects that you could change? Are there better ways to serve your customers? Should you add to your product or service line? Do you need to change the channels through which you deliver your products and services? What is the future environment likely to be in which your business will operate, and how do you need to adapt to take advantage of this?
5. Use this as a time to engage with your clients and show them you care. It is hard to do this when you are losing revenue and that is the focus of your mind, however, tough times call for tough people. Even if your customers are not purchasing as they used to, use this time to build better relationships, to better understand their needs and how you can serve them. Despite the tremendous focus in the last few years on costs and money, relationships do still count when it comes to doing business.

Take it easy on yourself. It is an incredibly difficult time. If you just need to have a break and rest then do that. And look after yourself.