

THE LITTLE BOOK OF
COPING



MARY O'NEILL & CHARLOTTE KNIGHT



*'Something very beautiful happens
to people when their world has
fallen apart: a humility, a
nobility, a higher intelligence
emerges just at the point when
our knees hit the floor'*

Marianne Williamson

INTRODUCTION

We have never experienced anything quite like life with Covid-19. We are having to adapt to working from home and not seeing our friends, colleagues and family, while also being concerned for the health and wellbeing of our loved ones, not to mention our own. We feel disconnected at a time when most of all we want to give and receive support.

We are worried about the economy and what it means for business and livelihoods. And yet we still have to embrace our role as a leader, manager, employee, mum, dad, husband, wife, daughter or son - all these roles are more important than ever. So, how do we cope?

One of the best ways of coping is to pause and reflect, acknowledge how you are feeling and try to find little ways to make you feel stronger.

This little book is designed to help with all those things and to support you in your role as a leader, colleague or friend. Think of it like a personal 'diary' - your trusted companion where you can capture your thoughts, but also a source of inspiration to help get you through. It includes hints and tips and some suggested activities that you could run yourself or with your teams. Most importantly, we hope it makes you smile and gives you strength.

Please feel free to share it with your teams and friends. And let us know what you think using [#littlebookofcoping](#)

Mary O'Neill & Charlotte Knight

the creative

the words

'Think about embracing a character to help make you feel stronger and draw on it when you feel you need a boost'





'The greatest compassion is the prevention of human suffering through patience, alertness, courage and kindness.'

Amit Ray



'ONE DAY AT A TIME'

As a leader or manager, and as an employee, we have probably spent large parts of our career encouraging each other to consider our long-term goals and career ambitions, and developing development plans to support it. Right here, right now 'long-term' goes out the window. Take each day as it comes.

Think about the one or two things you want to achieve today and concentrate on those. Clearly that includes how you can support your business in the current environment - but long-term planning should be put on hold. For the moment the short-term will look after the long-term.

For leaders and managers, this list should also include how you are going to support your people. More than anything your people will want to know that they can reach out to you and that you are ready to listen. You might not have the answers but just being there is important. This is also a fundamental enabler of trust and teams that trust each other are stronger together. They lean on each other during times of crisis and can emerge even stronger.

You must also listen to your own feelings.

How are you feeling today?

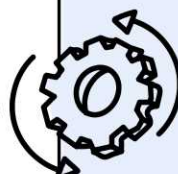
What are you most anxious about?

Who can support you?



TOP TIPS

Revisit how your day works and try and create a sense of **routine** – including allocating work time and down time. With families at home it might be easier to allocate work time to early in the morning or later in the day, and spending time with your family can be a welcome tonic – for them and you. Encourage and support the same of your teams.



Put time in your employee's diaries to **check-in** and establish a rhythm – be clear on when and how you will connect as individuals and a team



listen, listen, listen – ask how your people are feeling, what are they most worried about



Demonstrate **trust** – ask your people to input in to the projects or challenges that you are working on, have open conversations



Revisit and draw on your **personal purpose** – and if you don't have one perhaps spend some time considering what it is, there are lots of resources available on line (or contact Mary or Charlotte)



Recognise and celebrate the 'big and the small' – a milestone, a personal birthday or anniversary, or simply getting through the week!



Ration the **news and media** – daily reports of 'crisis' can feel overwhelming, perhaps tune in just a couple of times a week, and advise your teams to do the same



Simply let go and be in the **now** – take a deep breath and let go of the past and the future



NOTES:

How am I feeling today, how can I draw on my purpose to give me strength?

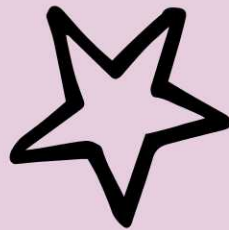
What are the one or two things I am going to prioritise today?

Tomorrow is a new day, who have I connected with today, and who am I going to reach out to tomorrow? How can I make them, and me, feel connected and motivated?

DOODLE:



Self portrait - draw a picture showing how you think you will feel when you have come through a difficult time. Encourage your teams to do the same and then share.

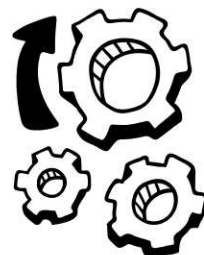


'You need to let the little things that would ordinarily bore you suddenly thrill you.'

Andy Warhol

'FIND JOY IN THE SIMPLE THINGS'

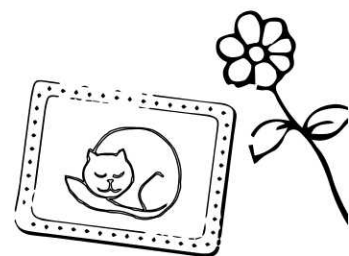
Life before COVID-19 probably felt like running at 100 miles per hour on a moving traveller. We rarely had enough time to think and were juggling a million different priorities from work, home and family. Although there are now other competing pressures, the silver lining of lockdown is that life will inevitably have to slow down a little. At the very least many of us won't have a commute! We will also be missing many social activities that we had in the diary.



At the same time our levels of anxiety will be high which is why it is important we make, and take, the time to pause. And although we might be missing a concert or party, you can find joy in simple things and this, in turn, is good for your wellbeing. Don't simply chain yourself to your desk for longer. In fact that will be unproductive - it is not possible for us to remain engaged and productive over long hours. Watch how your garden changes from day to day, read more stories with your children, play a favourite board game. These activities can be hugely rewarding and help you cope better.



This also extends to supporting your team. Make the time to connect and share in the small things. Instead of rushing straight in to priorities and actions on a team call spend the first ten minutes simply talking about each other's day. Ask them to share a favourite photo or object from home. Meet their children and pets via Zoom, Teams or whatever platform you are using. Technology really is our friend during these times - it can make us feel connected and share in the simple things together.



The 'fear of missing out' (FOMO) which many people do suffer from is also completely removed - we are all in the same boat! But it is so important to say so, to prevent friends and colleagues from feeling isolated.



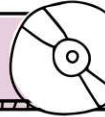
TOP TIPS

Where to find joy in the simple things:

Re-read a favourite book, or one that you have been meaning to read



Download a box-set or explore new podcasts



Get moving – go for a walk, look for nature and/or listen for new sounds



Look up to the sky – what do you see?



Create your 'top ten' playlist



Reach out to your neighbour



Call a friend or colleague that you haven't spoken to for a while



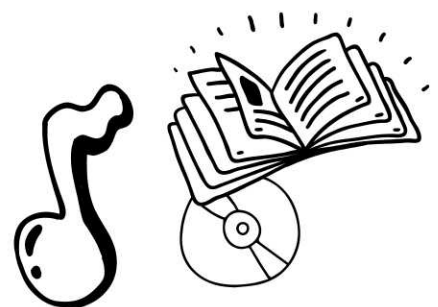
What would be the **top ten** songs on your play list? (and then play them loudly!)



- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

What three **books / movies / box sets** will I enjoy over the coming weeks

- 1
- 2
- 3



DOODLE:

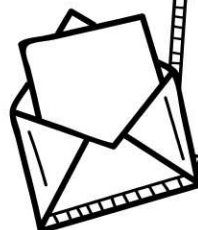
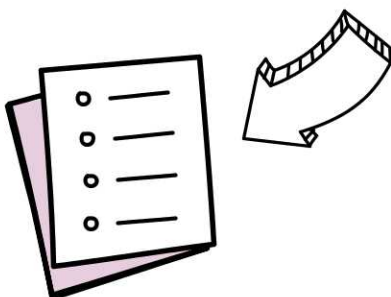
What do you love in life?



SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE 'SIMPLE' THINGS:

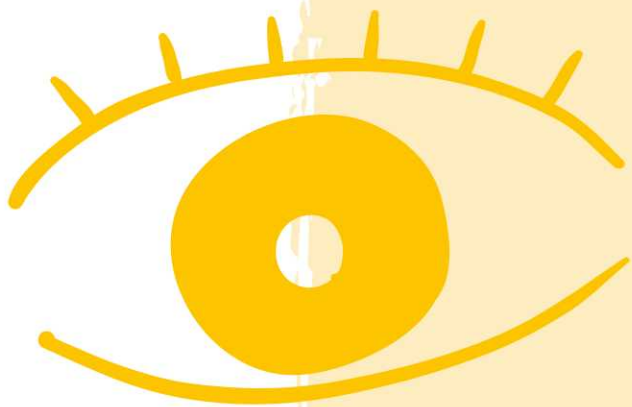
Consider asking your team what are the simple things that make them happy?

Ask them to create a log during the week of where they have found joy.



- ✓ A hot, bubbly bath
- ✓ Cuddles from our children
- ✓ Grandmothers
- ✓ Crème eggs
- ✓ Sunday morning papers
- ✓ Watching the sea
- ✓ Re-runs of Masterchef!
- ✓ Random acts of kindness
- ✓ Sending or receiving a card





'Just because your eyes
are open, it does not mean
that you are awake.'

Haemin Sunim

'CREATING YOUR HAPPY PLACE'



We all have a place that makes us feel good. It might be somewhere we have fond memories from, or somewhere we visited often as a child. Or it could simply be somewhere beautiful and uplifting. We might not get to go there very often but imagining our happy place can also bring us strength.

Make the time to think about where your happy place is and take yourself there (in your imagination) at some point each day. You might like to have a picture of it near your desk or workspace.

Our homes should also be a source of happiness which is why it is important to separate your work and home space as far as possible. Even if space is tight or you share it with others, make an effort to create a separate area for work - you might have to create a rota with people in your house.

And at the end of the day turn off your laptop and put it away.



TOP TIPS

How to create your happy place...

Surround yourself with some beautiful things – some fresh flowers, a favourite picture, new stationery



Clear-up – ensure your space isn't cluttered with toys or laundry!



Take care of how you feel – have a shower (!), get dressed for work, it will make you feel better



Be active – take a break and go outside, breathe in the fresh air



'Think about somewhere you have enjoyed with friends or family – what made it special?'



'YOUR VIRTUAL DIARY'

Remote teams are not a new concept, many of us are used to dialling-in to team meetings from wherever we are. But removing the concept of the office completely and being at home for your full working week is probably a new concept for many, and it removes choice.

In our current environment, or any crisis, it is human nature to take comfort from being part of a bigger team or family - we need to create the experience of 'being in this together' and work through what it means and how we will come through it. Creating a strong sense of togetherness often comes from the 'down time'. This includes social experiences and 'team chat.' It also removes any sense of isolation which is integral to feeling that we are able to cope.

The joy of technology today means that we do not need to feel alone, we can be together. We just need to think about how we grow that togetherness. Over the past few weeks we have seen an explosion of inspiration and activity across virtual communities. Here we share some ideas for how to create a fulfilling virtual diary.

QUESTIONS OR ACTIVITIES YOU CAN RUN VIRTUALLY:



Have a team happy hour or coffee morning – encourage them to wear hats or bright colours, share photos and pictures from home, ask what the best thing about their day or week has been.



'Behind the keyhole' – ask people to share the best thing about their home or where they live!



Create a virtual band or choir – for inspiration go to Virtual Choir www.ericwhitacre.com/the-virtual-choir





Click
Click



Harry Potter quiz – encourage your team to take this quiz and identify what house at Hogwarts you would be in Harry Potter house quiz www.wizardingworld.com/quiz



Encourage everyone to record a diary or blog of their day or week and share at the end of the day or week



Run a MasterChef or bake-off competition – you might not be able to taste them but you can showcase them?!



Consider running some virtual team capability development sessions – these could focus on wellbeing and how to cope with anxiety (get in touch with Mary or Charlotte)



Introduce your children or pets!

We also know that working from home brings its own challenges. Colleagues are supportive of this, after all we are all in this together. It might be fun though to play 'virtual meeting bingo' on your next video team call (with positive intent!).

Look out for the following activities...

A dog barking	Spot two people instant messaging (look at their faces!)	Screen freezes	A TEENAGER (WITH HEADPHONES ON)
A FAMILY PHOTO IN THE BACKGROUND	Someone forgets to mute	A home delivery	A cup of coffee/tea is delivered
Music	Someone forgets to unmute	A cat	ACCIDENTALLY SHARES SCREEN
Uncontrollable coughing	A SPILT DRINK	A small child	Someone clearly on their phone!

'WORDS TO INSPIRE'

Cope

/kəʊp/

Verb

1. **to deal effectively with something difficult.**

"If you cope with a problem or task, you deal with it successfully"

Think of a word that empowers you, or makes you feel happy...
and simply pull it out when you need some encouragement.

Here are a few of our favourites:

CELEBRATE

SHARE

Adorable

BLOSSOM

Indulgent
TRUTH

Survive

Intriguing

Memorable

Calm

Beauty

Love

CAPTIVATE

GRATITUDE

Zen

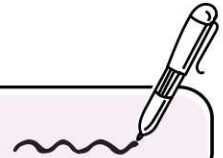
Fascinating

EXERCISES:

Consider doing any of the following to embrace powerful words and encourage your teams to do the same. You could share with each other or run a competition.

If you have a social media platform at work eg Yammer, Slack, you could encourage people to be creative and share their examples...

Write a poem



Write a blog



Write your 'biography' on a page – extend to share a picture of who would play the movie character in your life and why



Host a virtual book club



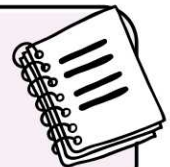
Print out a few of your favourite words and put them on your wall



Avoid corporate jargon! Rather like our 'virtual meeting bingo' run buzz word bingo in a team meeting, capture all the corporate words that you hate!



Open your mind to words – go on a creative writing course or run a writing workshop with your team (We can help with this - contact Mary or Charlotte)



One final thought: **TAKE THE INITIATIVE**

What we've described so far is a form of positive re-set across our professional and personal life. Coping isn't just about surviving - it is about making a success of the situation. Try to make a virtue of lockdown to change things in ways that will improve life later on when restrictions are lifted. Think about the positive actions and behaviours that have struck you over recent weeks... we are all in this together.



ABOUT MARY AND CHARLOTTE

Mary and Charlotte have been working together for more than twenty years (yikes!). We run our own businesses but often work together to deliver our projects and campaigns. We have a shared passion for bringing creativity and purpose to all that we do. At the heart of our approach is building strong and trusted relationships with our clients.

We are proud of our work and always looking for what more we can bring. The 'little book of coping' hopefully gives you just a small taste of our thinking and approach.

Please do share it with whomever you feel would find it helpful:

[#littlebookofcoping](#).

If you would like a bespoke version created, perhaps with some of your own words and experiences, and your company identity, get in touch - we would be delighted to help.

We hope that all our clients and friends stay safe and well over the coming weeks.

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