

How to return to life after COVID-19

For most of us, we're reaching the first anniversary of when we first felt major impacts from COVID-19; schools closed, businesses sent workers home, we were urged to "socially distance", and toilet paper was nowhere to be found. A year on, we find ourselves with some hope. Cases are slowly dropping, vaccination rollout is going well, and we're starting to see glimmers that we might be able to get back to somewhat of a normal life.

But resuming our old activities often comes with some additional stress. How do we actually get back to "normal" after such a challenging year?



Start small and enjoyable.

If you've been strictly distancing for the last year, jumping right back into grocery shopping on a Saturday afternoon is likely to be an intense, stressful experience. When you're ready to resume some in-person activities, start small and enjoyable. Dipping your toes back into the water of socializing is a little easier if you have one friend over for coffee, or perhaps go out for breakfast on a weekday with one or two people.

Slowly expand your world

Rather than jumping right into busy restaurants or going to public events, expanding slowly can help with the anxiety. This might mean starting to see one or two friends or family members initially and slowly expanding this circle until you're back to seeing all of your important people.

Enjoy the outdoors

Guidance from experts is that outdoor activities are lower risk than indoor activities. As the wonderful North Dakota winter eases off, doing as much socializing as possible outdoors will help keep things low-risk, and help us soak up as much good weather as we can.

Follow public health guidance

Current public health guidance encourages us to continue masking, avoiding heavily crowded places, washing our hands frequently and staying home if we feel even slightly unwell. While your individual circumstances may allow for cautiously resuming in-person activities, continue following the guidance of your local public health in order to keep yourself and others safe.

Trust your instincts

Having some anxiety is inevitable after the last year. We know from other natural disasters that the emotional recovery can take a long time after the risk has passed, so be patient with yourself if you're finding making decisions about resuming in-person activities stressful. It's okay to take extra time if you need to, and to be cautious. Trust your instincts.

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