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# THRIVE II

## How to Thrive in the “New Normal?”

We spent the past 18+ months dreaming of all the social activities and things we want to do “when things get back to normal”. But, now as the restrictions are lifting many of us find ourselves feeling overwhelmed, tired and guilty (for feeling overwhelmed and tired). Why is that so? Change is stressful for everyone. Every time there is a major change in our daily routine, we go through an adaptation period (even when the change is positive). Postponed plans, missed faces and delayed vacations are now within our grasp. We may be feeling urgency to reconnect but anxious at the same time. This is completely normal and to be expected! The most important thing is to embrace the changes while taking care of yourself and your family.

## How can you embrace the changes and take care of yourself?

- ✓ **Have patience:** We aren’t “there” yet but we are getting closer. There is a rollercoaster of information coming in, often conflicting. Look for the positive news.
- ✓ **Take it slow:** The streets are busier and noisier, the places you have been going to are filled with people, and your schedule is filling. These stimuli can be tiring and draining. Expose yourself slowly to things you regularly did in the pre-pandemic world. Give yourself time to adjust.
- ✓ **Keep your “free time” free:** At the beginning of the pandemic, many of us felt overwhelmed with too much time on our hands. Now, it’s the opposite. We tend to feel the urge to fill all the spare time we had during lockdown. This only adds to feelings of distress or fatigue. Try to regularly schedule a quiet day or an evening to yourself to recharge.
- ✓ **Keep the positives:** For many of us lockdown meant extra time spent with our loved ones, our pets and having extra time in bed in the morning. Try to keep these moments whenever possible.
- ✓ **One day at a time:** If you are returning to your place of work, it can be overwhelming after working from home for so long. Take it one day at a time, you will catch the groove again.

## How can you help your kids readapt to social life and in-person school?

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- ✓ **Take it slow:** Children find change more difficult than adults. Children also perceive the passage of time differently than adults. Two years feels like “always” for them. Take things slowly and expose your child or teen gradually to new routines.
- ✓ **Socializing:** Children can be fearful of meeting people, even those they knew before. Introduce your child to interactions with peers slowly: visit playgrounds at quiet times, have playdates with only one or two peers, talk about going back to school in a lighthearted way. Ask questions about their thoughts and fears about returning to school. Listening and validating their feelings will help them cope.
- ✓ **Routine Changes:** Going back to school in person means waking up earlier, showering at a specific time, and having homework and play time scheduled. To help your kids adapt, expose them to some of the routines before school starts. Find some fun math or science games to get them back into thinking mode while interacting with others.
- ✓ **Back to school fears:** During the pandemic, many children experienced solely family interactions in their home, so going back to school and being away from parents for long hours can be stressful. Take your child to school to visit the school grounds before the first day of school to get re-acquainted. Also, have your child play under the supervision of other adults you trust while you are not around to get them used to the separation.
- ✓ **Imagination Game:** If your kid is showing signs of separation anxiety, you can try this imagination game a few days before and on the first day of school. Challenge your child to picture you doing something during the day when you are apart, tell them what your plans are for that day breaking it down to pre/post-lunch. If they have other siblings in the same school, the imagination game also helps to picture their siblings close to them.

### Important takeaways

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- ✓ **Practice self-kindness:** Be gentle with yourself. It is ok to miss some social events. Consider dropping pre-pandemic activities that no longer fit into your life. The upside of the “new normal” is the chance for a reset in our relationships, activities and hobbies. Allowing yourself to slowly transition into a busier routine is paramount.
- ✓ **Talk to a therapist:** Should you or someone you love experience overwhelming emotions during these unprecedented times, don’t hesitate to reach out for help. At the Roncesvalles Psychology Clinic, our doors are always open for you and your family.

### Where I can learn more:

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- CBC online games for kids  
<https://www.cbc.ca/kids/games>



- The Happiness lab, by Dr. Laurie Santos  
<https://www.happinesslab.fm>



- Work Life with Adam Grant  
<https://www.adamgrant.net/podcast/>

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