



Re: BALANCE

A photovoice project by Dr. Maria Quinlan

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Foreword

In 2019 we worked with Dr. Maria Quinlan on our first photovoice project, *On Balance*. It was a year after moving into new facilities and it gave us an opportunity to reflect on our new way of working. The outcome was a powerful telling of the personal and professional experiences that the year had brought. The resulting exhibition travelled around the organisation and people found themselves able to engage with it because they could see their own story reflected in the photos and narratives of their peers.

When Covid-19 came along everything changed; at a societal, economic, and personal level. One area that will almost certainly never be the same again is the world of work. There are upsides and challenges to being part of a distributed workplace and everyone is experiencing these based on their personal circumstances. For most people, work is a social experience populated not only with colleagues but with friends. We thought it important that as we went through this together we should experience it consciously and collectively.

I think that life is a collection of stories. That is true for us as individuals but also for organisations and even a society. Our new photovoice exhibition, *Re: Balance*, has given people an opportunity to share their stories of Covid-19. The openness and generosity of the contributors has been extraordinary. They have opened up their hearts and their homes to us in a way that will allow us as viewers to see ourselves, our own stories, in theirs.

At a practical level I believe this is a powerful piece of social research. But, perhaps more importantly, at a very human level it's a way of seeing how connected we are because we'll see other people having our experiences. At a time when we're apart, I hope it helps with our sense of community.

When I reflect on my experience of working remotely, I find myself thinking about the number of video calls that have been interrupted by the arrival of someone's child. In the old world, people would have become stressed by this, but this has changed. We've accepted that they are not interfering in our workspace; we are interfering in their home. We know that this is often their first experience of their parent's colleagues and we want them to feel welcome. We've learned more about each other in this new world than we knew before. Perhaps the separation that Covid-19 has forced upon us will actually bring us closer together.

Thank you to everyone for sharing their stories and I'm proud that we can now share them with you.

Tim Hynes

Group Chief Information Office
AIB

About

This project uses a unique and innovative methodology called photovoice to capture the lived-experience of AIB Technology employees as we navigate the strange and uncharted waters which COVID-19 has led us into. *Re: Balance* was conducted on behalf of AIB by the sociologist Dr Maria Quinlan, who has pioneered the use of photovoice within organisations to help employees to share their experiences in a way that is deeply nuanced and authentic.

Seventeen women and men participated in this project, sharing more than 200 photographs. This book represents a selection of their work, taken during April 2020, as we all adjusted to life at a distance from each other. As such it captures a moment in time, one window into life at this time of upheaval and change.

Introduction

Following on from the success of last years *On Balance* photovoice project, in which we explored work and life balance within AIB Technology, we set out to again use the photovoice method to help us make some sense of this time, and to capture the insight and voice of employees as we navigate these uncharted waters.

The aim of this project was firstly to provide space and time for staff to reflect and to share their experiences, and their voices at this time of upheaval and change. Photovoice has several layers to it in terms of what it sets out to achieve – while it is a research method which allows us to gather and share our experiences and insight with others, it is also a narrative therapeutic technique.¹ By taking photos and gathering together over several weeks to share them with others in a safe space, we have the opportunity to reflect and to contemplate our thoughts, feelings and emotions. This process has been found to be a powerful tool which can facilitate us in making sense of challenging experiences, and thereby feeling an increased sense of agency and empowerment. It is a tool that allows us to tap into our unconscious through the use of our creativity. From that place we put images and then words on what we are feeling, so that we can articulate that and share it with others.²

Similar to *On Balance*, the photographs and stories which accompany them in this project are intimate portraits of how we are living, and how we are working – this time in the shadow of a global pandemic. Once again there is an intimacy in their simplicity – dinner tables, birthday cakes, daily commutes replaced with daily walks, lunch with colleagues replaced with lunch with family-members.

The title *Re: Balance* reflects many aspects of the photographs and narratives shared by participants. For many it is a time of contemplation and reconsideration – both regarding how we balance all aspects of our lives and how we may wish, and indeed be required, to come into a new rebalancing of our position on this planet. It also reflects the duality and paradoxical nature of this time and the experiences shared by the people who took part in this project. The psychiatrist Carl Jung described paradox as one of our most valuable spiritual

possessions, he said that “only the paradox comes anywhere near to comprehending the fullness of life....by not forcibly representing the unknowable as known, it gives a more faithful picture of the real state of affairs”. In facing those paradoxes head on, the participants in this project reflect how we are forced to hold a multiplicity of realities, a diversity of experiences at the same time in life. While some are experiencing this time as a so-called ‘great pause’, others are finding they are busier and more stressed for time than ever. The great pause for some is an overwhelming period of loss, excess work and speeding up for others. Sometimes we experience the light and shade almost simultaneously. This time calls on us to hold this multiplicity of experiences for ourselves and for each other – both grief and joy, pain and growth, struggle and hope.

This project and its outputs are contemplative rather than definitive, open-ended rather than resolute. This time is challenging us as individuals, organisations and as societies, but it is also providing a pause to potentially reconsider how we live, how we work, how we connect, how we treat each other and the planet. It provides potential opportunities for rebalancing our relationship with the earth, and for addressing some of the stubborn inequalities in society. As one participant puts it – it’s an opportunity to ‘wake up and smell the flowers’ with regard to what we take for granted, and our relationship to and responsibility towards others and towards the environment.

Participants recognise and are grateful for their privilege – the privilege of a secure job which they can do remotely; of space in their homes; of resources. They are also grateful for their health, and that of their loved-ones. Lives have been upended and people are coping – but it’s not without its challenges.

This project aims to start a conversation, and to provide a space for others to share their experiences. This is just one window into lockdown, there are many others – perhaps you see your experience reflected here or perhaps you feel there is another story that needs to be told, we welcome your contribution to this continuing narrative.

Methodology

Putting the employee voice at the centre

Seventeen participants (ten women and seven men), working in two separate groups took part in this project. Three two-hour workshops were facilitated virtually via Zoom between April and May 2020.

Participants shared over 200 photographs, with over 24,000 words of narrative to accompany them. This initial output is a selection of their work.

Photovoice has been chosen as a tool to explore this issue as it is a creative method which allows for a more in-depth, nuanced exploration of people's experiences. As this current period of uncertainty, and how we are adapting and coping, is multi-layered and complex, photovoice is a method ideally suited to facilitating participants to explore and represent their experiences of this time.

Using photographs to give voice to people, who often feel unheard and unseen is a person-centred and co-created methodology that can be both a powerful and positive experience for the participants while also being an impactful way of providing deep insight into an issue for the wider organisation and indeed society. Photovoice helps articulate the human stories within an organisation and allows us to better understand the individual experience.

The photovoice method is part of the Participatory Action Research tradition (PAR). PAR focuses on research which is a means and an end – in other words it is real-world applied research which leads to direct, practical action and change, while at the same time engaging and empowering the people taking part in the project. It is research by and with employees rather than 'on' employees. As such it taps into the biggest resource an organisation has, and preferences their voice.³

With an increased focus on the ways we work, and what the potential future ways of working should be, there are rightly calls for workers' voices to be heard amongst all the so-called 'expert' discourses in this area. This photovoice project aims to go some way towards that goal – of putting the employee-voice at the centre of any future debates we are aiming to have regarding what we should learn from this crisis.⁴ The Greek root of the word crisis can be roughly translated as 'to-discern' or 'to-sift' – as we regain a new sense of balance regarding how we live and work, as we decide what needs to stay and what needs to go, the employee-voice matters.

Process

The photovoice workshop process designed for this project incorporates five key elements;

- Creation of 'safe-space'
Space where people feel comfortable to share their feelings and experiences.
- Introduction to visual literacy
Creative exercises to get people comfortable using the method.
- Facilitated group discussion
Participants decide / agree on themes to guide their photo-taking.
- Sharing of photos
Each week the group share and explain selected photos.
- Final selection and captioning
Each person selects photos to share and is facilitated in captioning process.

- *How is this current period affecting your emotional and mental health?*
- *What is helping you in terms of looking after yourself mentally, emotionally, physically?*
- *What are the changes that you're finding most challenging?*
- *What are the changes that are most positive? – are there un-imagined upsides?*
- *What are we learning about ourselves? – how we like to work, to live; what's important to us? what about this 'new normal' might we want to keep?*
- *How are we navigating this 'new normal' - what does it look like? What does it feel like?*
- *Can we re-imagine the workplace post-crisis?*
- *How do we maintain cohesion, connection, and foster a sense of belonging at a distance?*

Informed consent from participants was obtained over a phased basis and the project was managed as per the PhotoVoice Organisation's statement of ethical practice.

In the first week the groups were introduced to the aims and objectives of the overall project and to the photovoice methodology – no prior photographic experience was required for participation. Based on the overall aims and objectives of the project, the group discussed their own experience of COVID-19, and the associated changes to how we live and work, and discussed the themes that they felt they would like to explore via photographs over the three-week project timeframe. The following list of broad themes were used to loosely guide their photo-taking over the period of the project:

Key themes

The photographs and accompanying narratives within this book have been collated into six key themes. These themes are contemplative rather than definitive, and at times overlap as participants explore various aspects of their experiences within one image. There is however strong consistency in what participants are experiencing.

The surreal 'new normal'

The first set of photographs in this selection provide an overview of the surreal 'new normal' which COVID-19 and the associated restrictions have resulted in. The artifacts of this time include face-masks; disposable gloves; hand-sanitiser and bleach. Lives have been upended. There are empty streets and people queuing to enter shops to buy food.

My new routine starts with Domestos...[when shopping]..the relationship with my trolley is very different...I look at it like it's a lethal weapon [Sheila]

The less visible, but no less surreal, elements include the hard conversations that are happening as parents try to explain to young children why they can't see their friends or hug their grandparents; and the profound silence and stillness that is experienced as traffic and people stop;

I keep trying to capture the stillness of how quiet it is at night...There's just nothing. And it's not an eerie silence. It's just this really beautiful surreal nothing [Danielle]

There is the surrealness of birthday's being held 'virtually', with celebrations from a 1st to a 21st to an 80th birthday all represented in the groups' photos. People are connecting with family electronically from across continents and from across their own housing estates. Again the dualities and paradoxes are present as people discuss both the positives and the negatives of navigating these new methods of connection via screen. The wonder of being able to host a call with family spread across the globe, to the unique fatigue that comes with living so much of both work and social life online.

People are coping and adapting and surviving – gaining a renewed balance amidst the shifting groundlessness of this time, but every now and then the surreal nature of just how much has changed hits;

I feel lucky to be honest because it's been kind of fine. It's a funny one, I think I'm fine and then all of a sudden, some days I find it just kind of comes out of nowhere. I go to go and do something, like we say, as a family, we're going to go somewhere and then we realise oh no, we can't actually do that... [Frank]

While people are coping and adapting, the spectre of the virus, it's potential for devastation brings with it layers of physical and emotional labour – the extra time, thought and effort which is expended doing even the small things. Going for a walk, or going to the shops requires preparation – hand-sanitiser, face-masks, choosing the right time. The surreal sight of people queuing to go into shops and how quickly we have adapted to the needs of this time. The fear and anxiety that permeates our day to day existence is represented within these experiences.

Nature as solace and guide

Within this strange and surreal world we humans find ourselves, people are finding a sense of solace, comfort, meaning and wisdom in nature. While how we live and work is being dramatically changed, nature perseveres as it always has. There is a consistency to be found in the cycles of nature, and participants within this project share many aspects of the solace and wisdom that they are finding from the natural world at this time.

It's just getting a better appreciation of the beauty that's around us when there's death and there's tragedy... [John]

...the flowers are really beautiful...we are in isolation, but not the flowers. They are still together. They still don't care about Coronavirus or anything [Aswini]

Cherry Blossoms feature heavily in participants photos and serve as both a reminder, and as a means of expressing, the natural cycles of growth, blooming and loss that all natural things experience, including us humans. Mono No Aware is a Japanese term which loosely translates as the awareness of the impermanence or transience of all things.

Cherry Blossoms are a strong symbol of this concept in Japan, the idea that beauty and transience are intertwined. The Cherry Blossom is a strong metaphor for the paradoxical beauty and impermanence of life within the photographs;

...the cherry blossoms that I would have taken the picture of a couple of weeks ago, which was the blossoms up on the tree, all pink, are now down on the ground. It looks almost like snow actually, I thought, when I took the picture. It's a reminder that we just need to keep going...Nature is reminding us that life goes on. [Aoife]

It is also used by participants to describe how nature can both give life and destroy it...

The cherry blossoms; the good weather and all the flowers blooming uplifts my mood...[it also] brings to mind that nature can appear majestic and very beautiful, as well as ugly in the form of the virus [Hazel]

The ability of nature to hold these difficult paradoxes; and to be both fragile and yet have great strength and resilience is used as both a guide and metaphor by participants to describe their own journey towards acceptance of the challenging times we are living in;

I took this as a representation of my mindset, of how I've adapted to the whole Coronavirus situation. The first few weeks, I was very much in my head, like...everything is closing in on me...as I looked at this, I was thinking it's a small stream that travels right down and flows into the Dodder if you follow it long enough...it's a little stream, but it goes a long way. I thought it was similar to how everybody is doing their little part in this whole situation, it leads to something bigger...things will get better...It's just like a switch went off and I just realised that when it gets down to it, I can't change the situation and there is no point in being down about it and complaining. [Eoin]

For many in this project, the slowing down of life has meant that for the first time in years, or perhaps ever, they are able to see clearly and appreciate the cycles of nature. While we as humans may attempt to live in an 'always on' culture, nature is grounded in cycles and rhythms of growth and replenishment;

...it's funny – you hit 48 and you realise that you've never actually really watched a tree blossom properly...for the last how many years, I would look up as I was running down to the train or whatever and suddenly see all the trees with

with their leaves fully out and you kind of wondered how did that happen in one day? And now over the last number of weeks, well, you can see that it doesn't happen in one day. It takes quite a long time, so it's just about being much more aware and much more present. I definitely had lost touch with that and this has been really, really grounding. [David]

Adapting and coping

Along with spending time communing with nature, participants in the project describe the various ways in which they are adapting; and the coping mechanisms which help them to navigate the stresses of this time. Exercise, cooking, reading, getting back into hobbies which they maybe left behind in the busyness of daily life, are all helping. So too are mindfulness, poetry, philosophy, sewing - all of which are represented in the group's photographs.

This is just about mental health really - this is me on the bike. It's a screen dump from Strava and it's showing that I did the loop six times, so it's the repetitive element of it, trying to stay within the two-kilometre radius, but also, just getting out, exercising, getting out of the house and trying to keep the head in the right place. [John]

Connecting with others also features strongly as a key coping mechanism, and finding ways of connecting while maintaining a distance is something participants have adapted to. There are virtual pub-crawls, going-away party's and scout camp-outs all held via Zoom. Connection overall is a strong and consistent theme – whether it is connection with other people, our communities, beloved pets, or indeed connecting with the self.

Another way participants are making sense of this current period is to remember our past and to draw strength from what others have coped with and overcome;

...this is a commemorative garden for 1916...the link for me back to what we're going through at the moment is back in 1916, we all know what they went through during 1916 living in Ireland. At the same time, in 1918, they were facing the Spanish flu. I look at this and...the people who came before us and fought for our freedoms and I think as a society, we are coming together [Gabriel]

As history shows, things like this have happened in the past before multiple times and, loss happens, dark times, but and the world has gone through it and made it past and built itself up, and that's just part of life, in the grander scheme. [Eoin]

The unexpected upsides

While there are no doubt painful losses being experienced during this time, participants in this project have identified some gains also. The biggest gain for participants is time, the daily commute - which for some is a three-hour round trip, is replaced with time for extra sleep, time to exercise, to read, to connect with family, to cook, to pick back up long-forgotten hobbies. We see glimpses of how environmental shifts can impact on our ability to live healthier lifestyles, the slowing down allows people more time to take care of themselves, cook healthier food, get more exercise, practice mindfulness.

I've actually done a lot more with my day. I've learned to cook fresh food, you do so much more and you've just got so much more time because you really realise now what's important to you. It's kind of stripped back. It's not all about work. You live in your headspace, it's all about work and all of a sudden ...you can observe a lot more about what's going on around you. [Siobhan]

There is a stillness which affords time to contemplate, to reflect and to consider how we are living and how we are working, how we spend the limited time that we are given on this planet. Arguably as workers, we have not had such a dramatic change to our working conditions since the industrial revolution took us out of our homes and into factories. Being at home in these unusual times gives some participants time to connect with their families in ways they don't normally have time to do;

Lots of exercise, lots of fun...there certainly have been some positives to this lockdown. Having the kids in the garden, I guess for me, the big story of this is just interacting with my wife and kids. [Philip]

There is a strong appreciation amongst participants for this slow-down, this increased time and space. There is gratitude for being fortunate enough to have the privilege of space, closeness to parks, beaches, a secure job which they can do from home, and their health. There is time to do more 'living' even if it is in a contracted locked-down environment;

It's given us a break. It's given us peace...that's something I keep feeling every night when I'm out for a walk. It's crystal clear peace and tranquillity...we're not all rushing somewhere. We don't have a tick-box list of activities that we have to do. [Danielle]

The losses and challenges

While there are positive aspects to this time, there are also considerable losses, the predominant one for participants being connection with loved-ones.

We have video calls...with [our grandchildren] most days, but still, you just want to grab a hold of them, throw them in the air, tickle them...[Dec]

For those with elderly parents, and family who live in other countries, some on other continents, the uncertainty of when they will be able to see them again, combined with the worry of what would happen if their loved-ones got sick and they were not able to be there for them, is a heart-breaking reality.

I don't have my family near here. I cannot fly and I cannot go home. We do some calls...I speak with my parents every day, which we already did, but it's not the same. The worrying about them, worrying that if something happens, I won't be able to be there. It adds another layer to things...not being there with my parents, you are always worrying and thinking about what if. [Raquel]

I'm feeling quite connected to my family...even though we're writing letters to each other and not that physically close. I would usually go home once a month and someone from Scotland would always be over...so it's been quite difficult to adapt to just knowing when you will be able to go home next... [Aoife]

On an existential level, attempting to come to terms with the so-called 'new-normal' and the uncertainty that it highlights regarding the precarity of existence is challenging. The loss of freedom is felt keenly, the freedom to walk freely amongst the hills, the freedom to travel and see the world, to the more mundane freedom to choose to pop into a shop anytime you wish. The loss for children of time with their friends, their grandparents – and how children will cope with further changes as lockdown is lifted are all concerns for participants.

I miss the freedom to go up the mountains...I miss my choices...I miss my independence [Siobhan]

While for some, this has been a period where they have gained time due to a lack of commuting and other activities, for others time is now a scarce commodity as they try to balance the multiple roles of working from home while parenting full-time. Parents within the two groups are faced with a particularly challenging set of circumstances;

...you have to be a cook, a teacher, a worker, an employee, everything at home [Aswini]

...it's been challenging. If you ask me, I'm exhausted...I had to stay yesterday one hour in the evening to catch up on everything and I woke up one hour earlier today just to do work because I knew I wouldn't be able to do it during the day. I start at half seven, but today I was up at half six at the computer. [Luciana]

Reconsidering our responsibilities

The final theme that permeates through the photographs and the accompanying narratives is the sense that this period is a wake-up call that we needed in order to reflect and reconsider our responsibility to others and to the planet. Participants speak of the unsustainability of the current model of how we live and work as a society – with inequalities in terms of how we reward essential workers and how we treat the most vulnerable in our communities. There is gratitude and concern for the, often low-paid, frontline workers and the precarious gig-economy workers who may be lost within the relief packages, and who's life is difficult economically at the best of times.

...I think so often you don't appreciate them. You just get on with it. Many of these are the lowest paid among us all and they do such a valuable service...I think for all of us, this whole thing is a little bit of a stop, pause, rethink, re-evaluate, just literally wake up and smell the flowers. We don't know how lucky we are. Most of us have a little bit of space and we're in very fortunate positions. We're working, we're getting paid. You think of people who are in horrible situations, those in direct provision and others...where money is not coming in because they can't go out to work. Those with children who may have difficulties that need a lot of attention and I just think this experience will be a reset for everybody. [Janet]

As humans living on this planet, participants believe we need to reconsider our relationship with our environment. The slow down in human transport, traffic etc. is seen as a positive which while individually disruptive, longer term is something that we need to consider in order to rebalance how we relate to the earth;

I think now with the lockdown, we are understanding that we are the species that endangers our world and we need to do better work if we want our planet to survive [Raquel]

...I just hate the environment being damaged with emissions and I suppose the hardest part of my day is the odd time I do drive to Central Park, I hate that whole scene of bumper to bumper cars, lane after lane after lane. I think it's unsustainable in the long term, both mentally and environmentally. [Sheila]





The Surreal New Normal



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This is some street art from around where I live, a picture from one of my daily walks, and they're surprisingly motivational, especially during this time. This is one that was just put up a couple of weeks ago and I took a picture of, there's a little plaque in the middle, and it says, 'The bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike and yet notwithstanding, go out to meet it'. It's a quote from a Greek historian. It was actually this little spot that I usually pass by every day if I had been going to the office. It's just outside Ranelagh Luas stop and it's just a bit of brightness on a derelict building.

I sent it to my mum, who is a midwife, who's working back home in Scotland, so I think of her every time I pass this because she's all suited up in PPE every day when she's in her work, so it makes me think of her, her bravery and the incredible job that she does.



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This is my first day ever wearing a mask and I felt so self-conscious, but I have some neighbours who weren't so well and some elderly people that I helped with their shopping. I thought well, if I'm going into the shop, there's going to be so many people that could be infected. So I put a mask on for the first time and it was a bizarre thing. I guess we'll probably get used to it more, but it was strange. To a small extent, it protects you, but if you're at the early stages and you're not symptomatic, it means that you're not spreading. I think it's a responsible thing to do. Even if the evidence is still ambiguous, it's looking like the evidence is just growing and growing and growing that masks help stop the spread.

My friend is big into sewing and has started a business making fashionable face masks. She is inundated with orders. I took this photo of the masks I ordered. Who would have imagined in January that we might all be wearing masks in May!



© Hazel | 2020 | Re: Balance



© Sheila | 2020 | Re: Balance

My new routine starts with Domestos - every morning, before everybody else is up. It doesn't really bother me, it's not as if I feel negative towards it. It's just an acceptance that this is the new way of life. I go round everywhere with Domestos and make sure everything's clean. Changing all the towels, all that type of stuff. It's a whole new routine first thing before anything happens in the morning.

My only outing in the car every week is going to Dunnes Stores. It's about five minutes in the car. So really, apart from walking on my own around the area and that, that is the only outing I get. But the relationship with my trolley is very different. I look at it as a lethal weapon. That's the one thing, a bit of an element of fear...you go into a different zone when you're going in a supermarket now. I do have a very different relationship with my trolley than I did previously. I had the gloves on and I'd wiped it all down. You just look at it all very differently really.

Face masks. This is the CDC website, how to make your own bandana face mask. So there's a load of Amazon bandanas due in our house. Part of our life. I think it is going to be our new lives.

09:39

100%

Materials

- Bandana (or square cotton cloth approximately 20"x20")
- Rubber bands (or hair ties)
- Scissors (if you are cutting your own cloth)

Tutorial



Fold bandana in half.





© Siobhan | 2020 | Re: Balance

This photograph for me represents the new norm of going to the supermarket. I go to Tesco's and I do the shop for me and my mum and I mask up and I glove up in the car before I leave the car and then I go round the shops and when I come back, I have to take off the gloves and then I use the baby wipes and I wipe down everything and then I have hand sanitiser in my bag and I do that before I even touch the steering wheel. At first when I did this, I felt a bit self-conscious, what do I look like? Will people be staring at me? And now it's so normal... I've started into such a routine and I'm at the point now I don't care if anyone looks at me. I don't care how I look. I need to protect myself because I'm looking after my mum who is cocooning, so I can't be in contact with anybody. The different norms that you're now living in, whereas before, the first few days, you were probably one of five, ten people that did it and now it's everyone. Everyone has some sort of screen that they put on.

One of the biggest stresses in isolation is shopping. I generally love shopping, but this has become a stress now. This picture is from around 8:30am at Dunnes near my house, there was a queue for nearly one kilometre. People waiting to do shopping in the early morning at half eight. The shop opens at nine o'clock, I think. So they're all queuing up at Dunnes and even today, I had to go to Lidl in the morning at eight o'clock (in the queue for 15 mins before the shop opens) to do my weekly shopping. I never thought that I'll do this in my life.



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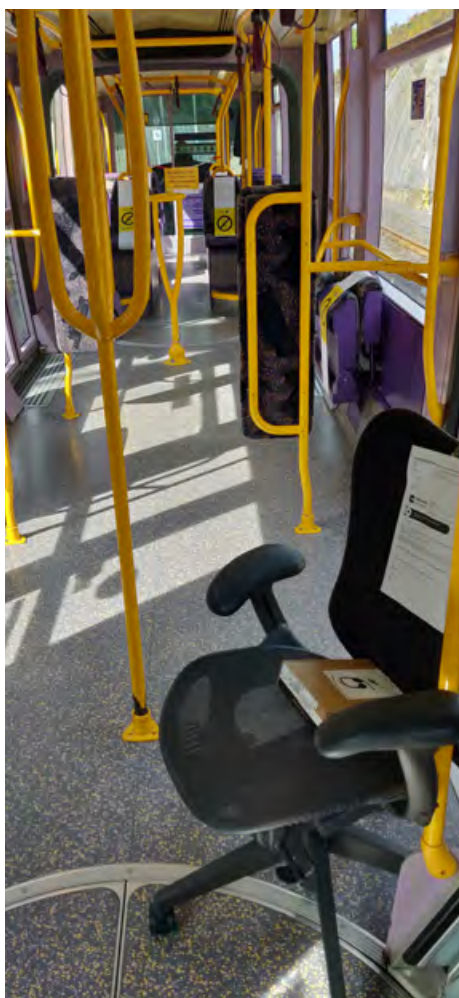


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It just looks like a railing. Very early on in the lockdown, when it went to the next level, Leo had that announcement, we were out for a walk and I was really conscious of social distancing. I was with my daughter at the time and she was on her scooter and had hopped off. She started grabbing onto the railing and I kind of abruptly said, 'No, no, no, don't touch that. You need to be careful. Don't touch that again'. And it led into a conversation, 'But why, Daddy? But why?' And just it went on for a little bit, trying to explain the virus and what's a virus? And why is there a virus? And then just to reinforce it, she asked the question again, so we sat down for about 10 minutes going through this discussion of what was really difficult trying to explain to a three-year-old kid what the virus was and why we have to keep our distance from other people just for the time being and that bled out into, you know, why the creches were closed and why she can't play with her friends and meet her friends from creche at the moment and stuff like that.

It was a little bit of a difficult conversation, but she was really good and she got it. She hasn't touched that railing. To be honest, I'm more relaxed about it now anyway, but she hasn't touched it since and when we meet people, when we go to Bushy Park or the like, she's really good in coming over to the side. She's actually keeping us more in check more so than the other way round.

It's amazing what children, even young children will grasp pretty quickly. That was a powerful one for me because it was the first real sense of we need to be careful and we need to protect the family a little bit and that railing was the first instance where I had that moment with my child where I had to explain what was going on. It's a fairly bland looking image, but it held probably the most meaning for me in that conversation that I had with my daughter.



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This is my excursion to Central Park. I'm only down the road on the Luas. I'm only four stops up, so I really, really wanted to get my chair from the office because my back has been killing me sitting on the one I've had for the last few weeks. Then I grabbed my headset as well. Everyone was laughing at me, saying, 'God, how are you going to get that home?' Because I don't have a car. And I was wondering if it's ok to bring on the Luas? But sure I dragged it on, and there was no one there and I just thought like when are you ever going to see someone lugging a chair onto the Luas with no one else on it? The whole scenario, it sounds gas. I was sending pictures of this into the team and they were like, 'What the hell are you doing?' Then I got an email from Facilities this week saying they'd heard that I came in and took the chair onto the Luas. They said I could have just told them that I were having difficulty getting it back to my apartment and they would have organised for it to be delivered.

I think the image speaks more for it than anything else. It's just a picture you look at and go, 'Oh god, what is this? What's happening?' It was the definition of really bringing your work home. Usually you're stuck for a chair on the Luas, but I wasn't then!



© Eileen | 2020 | Re: Balance

I thought we absolutely had to have a shopping queue. This was last Friday. I was frantically trying to get some sweets to stick in the boot of my car as I was going to go and collect a takeaway dinner. So I saw this queue. I had half an hour before I had to go and collect the takeaway and I was wondering would I get in on time.

This in Dundrum Shopping Centre, this was about one o'clock. I went over at lunch time to do my shopping. I needed to grab a few bits and pieces. As I was standing there, I was thinking, you'd never have thought that you're going to be standing blocks around the corner to queue to go into the shop to buy a sliced pan.

I'm in a good position in that I don't have to drive over and I'm only looking after myself and cooking for myself, so no one else is relying on me. I have that luxury in the situation.

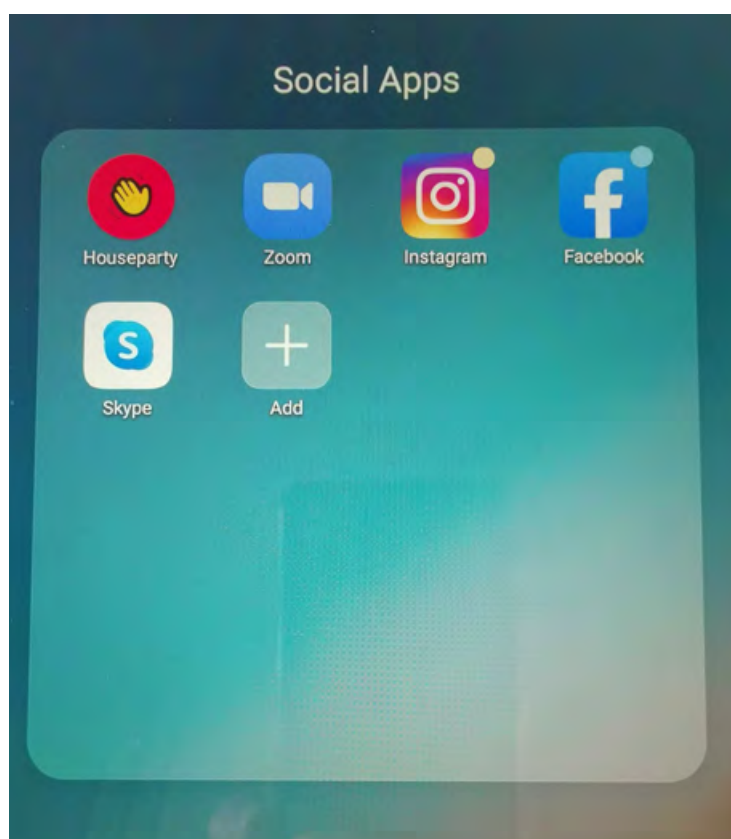


© Eoin | 2020 | Re: Balance



© Eoin | 2020 | Re: Balance

I took this photo from my apartment window. That's the Balally Luas stop. This was taken at half four or five o'clock on a Thursday evening, which would generally be packed. The cars go up that road back to back, traffic for at least an hour of people coming home from work, people coming off the Luas to go into the shopping centre. It's so, so busy and it's such a loud spot and you can hear cars beeping and at the moment, it's a ghost town and I just found it very surreal really. Another spot that I'm looking at going, 'Wow, like this is mad'. Today I had to go into the office and down at the Luas stop, you can hear the Luas from three stops down. You can hear it in the distance because there's no sound. There's no people. So I'm appreciating the quiet.



© Hazel | 2020 | Re: Balance

These are my social apps - so this is my new contact with my colleagues and my friends. I keep up to date with my friends on Instagram and Facebook; and use Houseparty, Zoom and Skype to communicate on a social aspect. Zoom is my new Saturday night going out. Nearly every Saturday since lockdown, there has been some get-together set up in Zoom, to catch up.

It was great at the beginning, everyone was really enthusiastic about Houseparty and Zoom. However I find that when I had a catch-up with my friends on Saturday it didn't last as long as it had done when we were meeting in real space. I got the impression people are getting tired of the whole lockdown and the idea that the only way we can communicate with people is through technology.

People can't go out, so people have nothing really to update us on. We have a half an hour call with my work team every day, and one of the questions on Monday morning is, 'How was everybody's weekend?' And I think it's just the same old, same old kind of thing because people can't go out and enjoy variety and excitement.

So technology is helping, but I think it's second best to going out and meeting people. It's like virtually reality with a very basic repetitive programme, limited variety and no colour.

I think when all this is over, people won't take it socialising as much for granted as they did previously.



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The Zone

This is where I sit every day and do my bits and pieces. It's the table in the caravan. I had a laptop originally and went and bought a big screen for it because spending any length of time just looking at a laptop screen and leaning over is not very good for the back when you get to my age. Or the eyes, for that matter. Then I have an iPad for doing other bits and pieces at the same time and there's a phone there in the corner as well. It's just so much technology, so much shite. And really, it sort of takes over. So every evening when I'm finished, I fold everything up and stick it all into one little corner and get the van back.



© Danielle | 2020 | Re: Balance

When I took these photos, I was looking at the email and how we connect and if I'm not working, if I'm not reading a book on my iPad, if I'm not talking to my friends on my phone, I'm not staring into one of these four black mirrors. I'm constantly on one screen or another. It doesn't matter what I'm doing. Even hobbies and everything. And that's all a screen is. I know we think of them as screens, but even now, if you look at your own screen, in a certain light, we can all see ourselves and it's this little black mirror. I thought it was quite poignant, that it keeps us connected to others, but constantly keeps reflecting back to ourselves.

The second photo was a chance to connect to work in a way we didn't before. We had a going-away do for one of my colleagues who's moving to a different team. We all had to dress up. It was a 'dress-up from the waist up' - so we all had masks. We didn't discuss it, but we had all masks and we all had bits and it was really fun and it was probably something we never would have done. We never would have done it in that way and it was really great. And some of those people, I've never met, and we all had a great time and I thought it was a lovely way to connect and something that never would have happened without the circumstances we're in.

And the same goes for the final photo here – this is a webinar. I always say I'll do these things. This was for Fashion Revolution Week and their whole aim is to show people how maybe mass-produced fast fashion can hurt people at the other end. So this webinar was about Craftism. Craftism is basically activism through crafting and I'd never heard of it in my life. I got to sit down on a Friday, late on Friday, and I decided just to sit on this hour-long webinar. It was amazing and again, because of the circumstances we're in, I had the chance to do that and I'm grateful for the chances that it's giving me at the moment to do all these different things that I've never done before.



© Luciana | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is the cake from my son's first birthday. I forgot to take a photo before I cut the cake. A girl who used to clean the house, she's going through tough times - they can't get the benefit from the government, so she's cooking and I asked her just to bake a cake for my son's first birthday.

We had a really big party planned because we're not religious, so we didn't baptise. So I thought oh, we'll just have a big party, but that didn't happen. We were supposed to have a pirate to come and entertain all the children. We were going to have about 60 people in a pub, but then we had to cancel. So we just had to Skype my husband's family at one o'clock, then I Skyped my family in Brazil at five. Then we sang 'Happy birthday' in English, then at five, we sang in Portuguese.



© Janet | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is a picture of my mum holding a batch of profiteroles that my niece made. My mum turned 80 on Sunday, so we had a virtual dinner party with video messages from her friends. It was super: I set up a Zoom call for Mum and my brother dropped down the food and we were all in our individual houses on the zoom call. It was great actually. Mum loved it, she was thrilled. We had video messages from friends & family so we played those and she just loved it. At least it made a fuss out of the day. A big momentous birthday like that, you want to celebrate it and obviously at the moment we can't. Or at least, you're limited as to what you can do.



© Eileen | 2020 | Re: Balance

This was a takeaway, for my husband's birthday. We only do the one takeaway. We splash out and go to our favourite restaurant and that's our treat.

My daughter, who's going to be 21 in a couple of weeks, arranged a Zoom pub for her dad. So we managed to get into his rugby crowd and got them all joined into a Zoom call. We sat down and they came and they went, so it was a nice birthday treat.



© Aoife | 2020 | Re: Balance



These pictures are I guess what the new reality is. So on a Friday night, me and my boyfriend would usually have gone out for food and drinks with friends, but now it's beer at the flat and we made our sushi and tried to pretend we were out. So that's just the new normal now, eating in and getting beer. I mean it's a lot cheaper than a normal Friday night out would be and like there's good sides and bad sides to it. Obviously we're saving money and we're getting to spend more time at home and stuff like that, but I do miss socialising and just, I don't know, being out and about. I feel like these four walls are getting closer and closer together.



© John | 2020 | Re: Balance

It's a bit of a funny one...since the start of the coronavirus almost all of my time is physically with my family. I guess it may be partly down to the change of routine or the fact that I'm not meeting people any longer; that I just stopped shaving. One less thing to worry about I'd suppose!! This week, in a moment of madness, I also shaved my head. Don't know what possessed me to do that one. My hair is usually long enough and haven't changed my hair style in about 15 years, so it was a bit of an impulse mad thing for me to do. I'd suppose I just told myself 'Fuck it...why not...sure who'd be looking at me anyway!!'. It was only half way through the head shave that I remembered the weekly Zoom call with the mother on Sunday after mass. She will MURDER me. Thank God for the social distancing and cocooning.. I'm safe for another month or so.



© Philip | 2020 | Re: Balance

My story of the week is interacting with family. For me, so much the whole lockdown has been about having lots of interaction with family. Obviously, my wife and kids and I see them frequently, but now I see them a lot more often, we're doing a lot more stuff with the kids. It's certainly a positive there.

I haven't been to a hairdresser for a while, so I just let my daughter have the scissors and let her do whatever she wanted. The only rule was she wasn't allowed cut my ear and she was careful. She had a go, and she clearly enjoyed it.

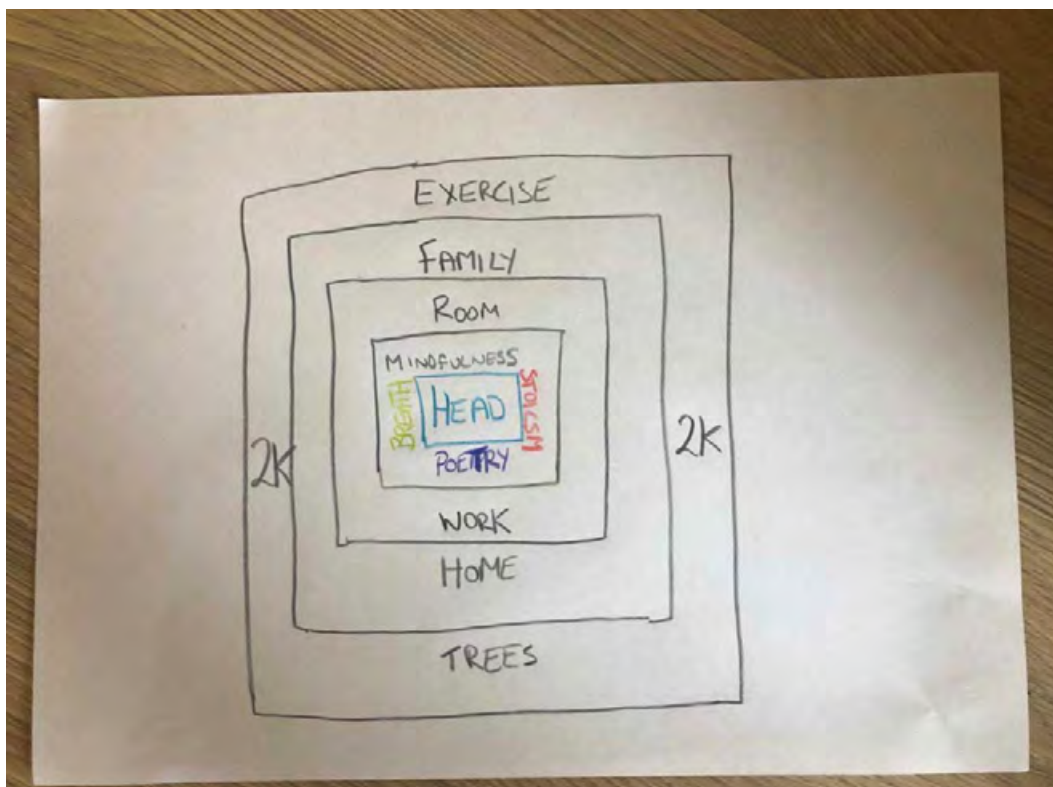
We also bought a hair clippers. First time - I would always have gone to a hairdresser when I needed a haircut. Now we actually got a clippers, so one of the reasons I was happy to let my daughter have a go at my hair is that I knew we were going to cut it with the clippers later, so whatever she did, it was going to be effectively undone. So, we bought the clippers and then away we went.



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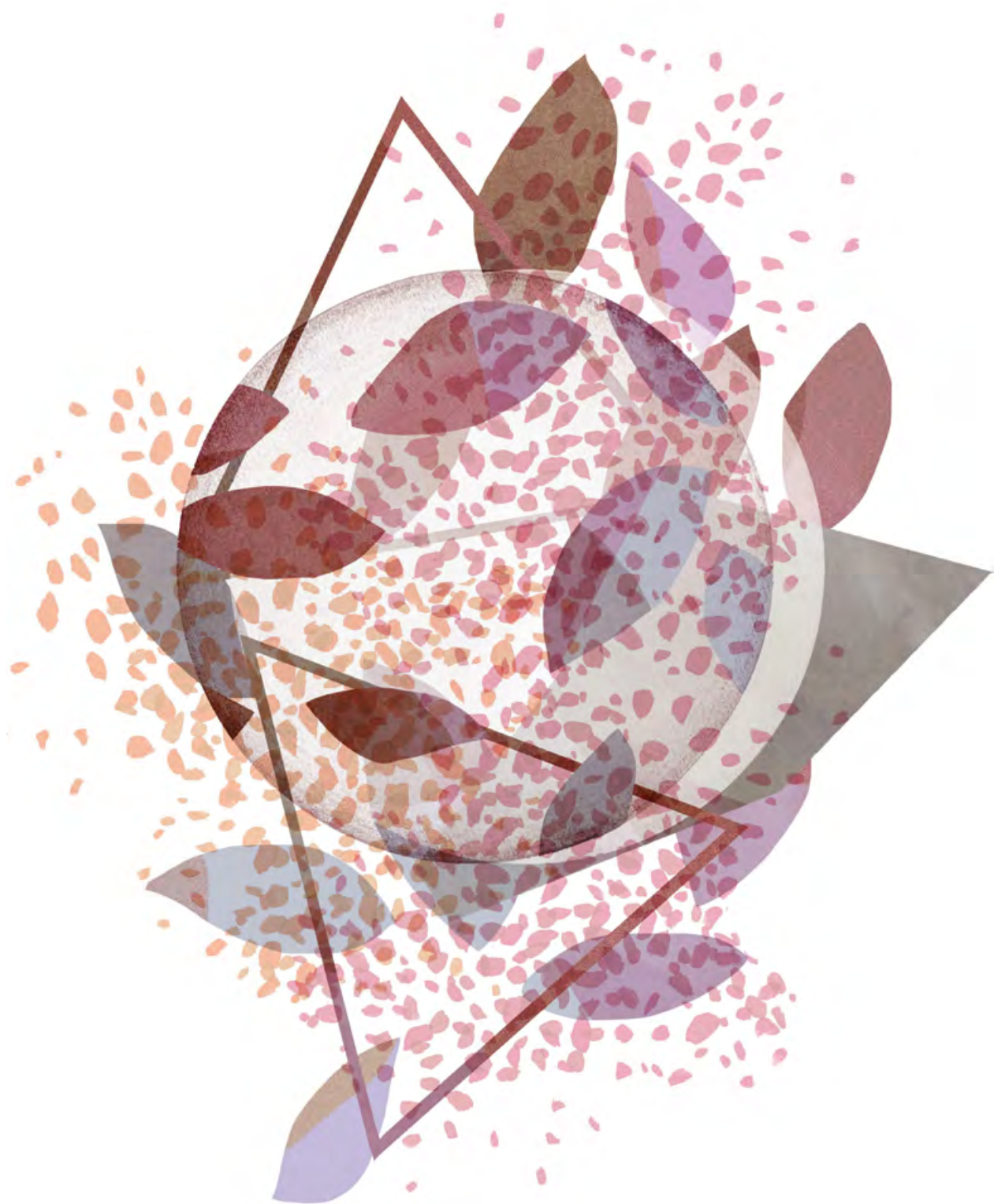
Covid 19 Then and Now – The Many Hats of the Corona Virus

When we came down to Wexford first, when I went out for a walk, I needed the woolly hat on the left. Then I progressed to a peaked cap because the weather wasn't quite as cold and now I can't go outside without a sun hat on me. So I suppose to me, it signifies the length of time this has gone on for. We've gone from when it was bitterly cold to now when it's t-shirt, shorts and a sun hat.



© David | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is sort of a visualisation to represent how it's like you're living in a series of squares or Russian Dolls. You've got your head, you as an individual in the middle of it and ok, so I've kind of rediscovered mindfulness, rediscovered poetry, I'm really interested in different ways you can breathe because of how it makes you feel better. And then Stoicism, that's a real interest as well. And then I've got the room that I work in. Then sitting outside that is my family. And then you have your home, which is another kind of a square that you're in, and then you've got your 2K limit for your exercise and I suppose that's where the trees, nature comes into it as well.



Nature as Solace and Guide



© Aoife | 2020 | Re: Balance

I think for me, it's felt like we've been in lockdown and working from home for so long and it's just like as if time has stood still or like it just seems like nothing is changing, but then when you go out for your walk, you realise actually the world is still going. Like here, the cherry blossoms that I would have taken the picture of a couple of weeks ago, which was the blossoms up on the tree, all pink, are now down on the ground. It looks almost like snow actually, I thought, when I took the picture. It's a reminder that we just need to keep going.

Nature is reminding us that life goes on. In the park that I walk around, there's tons of ducklings. This is just some of them that I managed to get all in one picture. You can see the happiness that it brings to everyone who walks around that park. Like there's little kids who are feeding them and taking pictures and when you see them kind of scuttle along the top of the water when they're trying to chase after their mum or their dad or each other, it's just it's quite funny. That's something that brightens up my day every day when I go to the pond to see where they are.

Everything else, the world is moving on the way it usually does, so we just need to try and keep going through this lockdown. I'm sure we'll come out at the other side, whether that's during summer or autumn or winter, who knows.



© Danielle | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is a photo of deer in the Phoenix Park on St Patrick's Day. The strangest St Patrick's Day I've ever had. The reason I chose it was I looked at the picture and it made me laugh because what you can't see, is what happened on the day - the lockdown hadn't started, but everyone had been told to socially distance. We hadn't really gone into anything very serious yet, so on the day, me and my friend decided we were going to meet up because she was on the north side and we'd go for a walk because we didn't know if it would get more serious.

We walked round and the park was packed. We couldn't believe it and we saw these deer, so we kept going into fields where there was no one to stay away from people and we realised we probably shouldn't have come out in the end. But we walked up and saw these deer and they were so still that we thought they weren't real. And there were so many people around and there was so much chaos and you can't see that in the photo. That's kind of what this feels like, this whole thing. It's like my home life is actually quite nice. My siblings moved out just before this started and there's just so much stillness in the house, but I know there's so much chaos outside.

I'd taken this photo on Paddy's Day and I'd never had a Paddy's Day where I'd go through town, where I could get on a bus that went through town. I mean it was just... It just felt really surreal. I had all my bits and pieces. I had disinfectant. I had hand sanitiser. All these things, but it was just a very surreal moment. I remember so many Paddy's Days where it's packed and that's kind of why I chose this photo. The deer all look half-asleep, relaxed... I just feel like maybe me and a few of my friends, we all were quite grateful that the worst we have to do is be trapped at home.



© Dec | 2020 | Re: Balance

New Life

With everything that's going on, with all the people unfortunately losing their lives and what have you, nature still goes on. There's all these buds. All the buds on trees, all the new life that's coming out.



© Frank | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is just along the Vico Road and I suppose for me, it represents a really special place. Right now, I can still do this. This is still within the 2K limit, so I can go up here on my bike, which I do every morning. So I wake up at about half five, six and I go for a spin around these areas and I love looking out here. I've kind of grown up looking out at this view and it's a special view. Right now, it's about taking time to appreciate nature a bit more. It's like you pass by all this stuff really quickly in your usual life, I know I did anyway in my usual life, and now I'm really starting to take time and look at the beauty around where we live. This is a lovely view out to the coast and I'm just really appreciating that right now.

I feel lucky like to be honest because it's been kind of fine. It's a funny one, I think I'm fine and then all of a sudden, some days I find it just kind of comes out of nowhere. I go to go and do something, like we say, as a family, we're going to go somewhere and then we realise oh no, we can't actually do that. And my mum, I feel bad for her. She's cocooning. Luckily she's quite close, so I can get down and have a distant chat with her now and then, but it's kind of hard for those folk. Going into a shop, I think at first, I was a little bit oblivious to how hard it was for other people and I went into a local shop and as I was leaving I said 'have a great weekend'. And one of the girls behind the counter, she kind of said under her breath, 'Yes, we're going to be in here, you know'. It was the Easter weekend and she was like yes, we're going to be in here. We're not going to have a great weekend.



© David | 2020 | Re: Balance

I suppose nature really is a big theme at the moment, and it's funny – you hit 48 and you realise that you've never actually really watched a tree blossom properly. This tree is literally outside my window here where I am working remotely. It was probably a week or two even before this started, I suddenly noticed that I could see the tree budding and so I've been trying just to take a picture each week of it with the leaves coming out. I think it's lovely from the point of view of being mindful and aware of things going on.

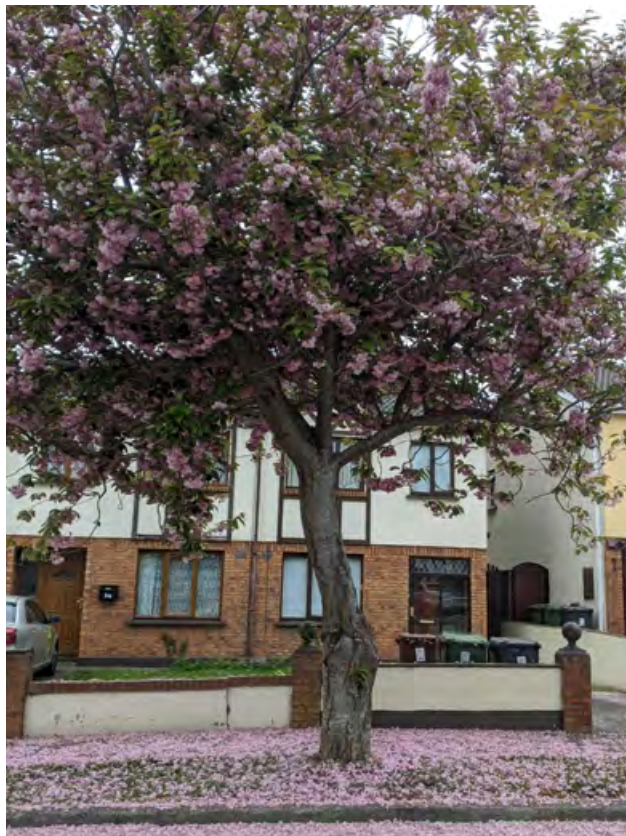
I don't know, for the last how many years, I would look up as I was running down to the train or whatever and suddenly see all the trees with their leaves fully out and you kind of wondered how did that happen one day? And now over the last number of weeks, well, you can see that it doesn't happen in one day. It takes quite a long time, so it's just about being much more aware and much more present. I definitely had lost touch with that and this has been really, really grounding.



© Sheila | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is the garden and it's where I get a lot of comfort and feel relaxed. There's two blue tits in this picture. Since I have been at home in confinement, I've really started taking an interest in birds. Maybe I just never noticed them, I don't know, but there's a lot of different types in the garden. I suppose these photos show the change in nature since confinement has started. That's the same tree - we've been here a few weeks now, but nature has moved along quite a bit, that's the blossom tree now and that was it a few weeks ago when the confinement started. There's a big difference. We've been in this for a while now at this stage, but the garden has changed an awful lot in the time we have been in this position.

I've found that I just absolutely adore being in the garden now and I'm just noticing so much more - birds that I would never have noticed. I'm really starting to watch birds now... whereas I'd never do that before. And then just each plant - I've a few trees in the garden, one is a plum tree blossom. I would never have known that that blossom is only around for about a week. So when the plum tree does blossom, it actually is only there for about a week. When it was there, the bees were at it all the time, so just having time to notice stuff like that has been a big positive as well. I've never literally had so much time to actually enjoy nature in the garden.



© Luciana | 2020 | Re: Balance

There's the cherry blossom and I just took that one because last year when my mum came over from Brazil for my son's birth, she loved the cherry blossom. It's just outside my house. She got here on 15th April and he was born on 17th. So literally he was just waiting for his nanny to arrive. She loved the trees, so I just passed by and took a photo.

I just like to see all the little petals on the flower. Even though we had spring in Brazil, I would classify it as hot and no flowers because you can't see any flowers. It's just warm there. We don't have the spring, like that change from winter to spring, summer. It's clear here. In Brazil, it just goes from warm, really warm, to mild, so you don't get that. So I really like to see the flowers.

This is the same tree, just taken a week later – you can see how the flowers are falling off. It's mad that in a week they just completely change. I just put them beside each other to compare, I passed by the tree a week after this and there were no flowers at all, just completely green. Everything has fallen off the tree. This was really just to compare the two, a week apart, and to see what happens.



© John | 2020 | Re: Balance

It's just getting a better appreciation of the beauty that's around us when there's death and there's tragedy in the rest of the world. We're in spring and the flowers, everything is growing so spectacularly. And because there isn't the traffic, because there isn't the noise and the hustle bustle around, you get to hone in and appreciate these things. All the other noise is gone, I guess, and you get to appreciate these things a little bit more.



© Gabriel | 2020 | Re: Balance

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© Aoife | 2020 | Re: Balance

I was walking home from a lunchtime walk one day and I saw this - first of all, I thought it was maybe stuck on the jaggy bit of the holly, but I watched it for ages and actually ended up taking a video of it afterwards. It was kind of going in really, really carefully into the berries and I don't know, they must have something that they like in them and it was kind of feeding on the berries for a while and then kind of edging out slowly. But it was just incredible to see something so delicate like a butterfly, especially that one.

You can't really tell from the photo, but it was actually really quite small and it was in amongst this big massive holly bush that kind of goes the whole way along the side of a tennis court near me. I watched it for ages and it was just incredible that it didn't get stuck or caught in the holly at all. It was just quite a nice distraction. I felt like if that guy can go about his way, feeding on the holly bush, I can probably go back and answer a few emails that I'd been putting off all morning.

This is the Portmarnock beach on a really beautiful sunny day in the morning. You could see just one or two people. Seeing the beach like this on any sunny day is nearly impossible. You just see loads of people, but the good thing is if you don't want to go to the beach when it's full, this is one of the best times you can go, and take a walk because it's a long sandy beach, so you can go for a really long walk, get some fresh air.



© Aswini | 2020 | Re: Balance



© Eileen | 2020 | Re: Balance

The other morning, this little guy was robbing the bird feeder's nuts. It is real - he did move away a couple of minutes later. It's not part of the shed!

I've started taking pictures of flowers that I like with the idea of planting them in the garden next year. So I'm choosing the flowers at this time of the year, and if I keep doing that through the year, I should be able to get a load of colour throughout the year in the garden – that's the plan.



© Eoin | 2020 | Re: Balance

This was taken in Marlay Park and it's somewhere I've never really walked around before, and this was a day where I'd been stuck in the house for a good few days. I live in Dundrum and before all this, I'd never really have gone on walks around Dundrum. I live next to the shopping centre, so all I ever really think of is right, the Luas is there. If I need to go somewhere, I'll get the Luas into town or I'd go down to my friends or I usually go into Rathmines or something. So I just started walking. I'm at the junction at the end of the shopping centre at the end of the village. One way goes towards Ballinteer, the other way goes into the village. One goes up towards Goatstown. I headed towards Ballinteer, kept going and ended up at Marlay Park. It's in my radius and I was like wow, this is huge. It was so surreal because the place was so empty - I had gone on my lunch break. I was gone for about an hour and a half, two hours - looking at the ducks and the swans. They're all just sitting there and you can hear birds chirp and the smell of all the trees. All these things that I wouldn't really have appreciated and took for granted.

I've been getting out so much more... I'm doing college two or three days a week. I'd be in the office for nine and then I'd be in college till 10 o'clock at night so now, even if I have a college class online, I'll be able to jump out for an hour and go for a walk. I'm becoming much more in touch with nature and appreciating it a lot more. Even getting up in the morning, I don't have to be up as early to rush myself.



© Hazel | 2020 | Re: Balance

I took this photo in a park where I walk at lunchtime. It brought to mind that nature can appear majestic and very beautiful, as well as ugly in the form of the vile virus. At the moment, the cherry blossoms; the good weather and all the flowers blooming uplifts my mood.



© Hazel | 2020 | Re: Balance

I'm big into gardening but I never could take the time to do as much gardening as I'd like, until now. I'm fortunate that lockdown happened during the long bright days. This is a rhododendron of the Lady Alice variety. What the picture doesn't tell you is that it has a fantastic really beautiful fragrance, particularly in the morning and the evening. The flowers blossomed in March and are only dying off now.



© Janet | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is a beautiful green area very near where I live and it used to be all closed off to the road but recently the council removed the hedge and opened it all up and it's just such a beautiful park. There are benches all the way around it. Beautiful flowers. It's such a peaceful area to sit in. It's right at the edge of the village and it's just gorgeous, there's an old post box, there's a water pump. Oh, it's stunning. It's a beautiful area, a lovely quiet space.

There's a new nursing home that's just been built straight across the road from it. I think longer term, this will be such a beautiful place for families to bring their elderly relatives to come and sit.

These are just little baby cherry blossoms. They're so young. It's only a very recent project, but I called it socially distancing trees because they're apart. I do feel that they'll grow up and they'll come together, just like we will all be back together again.



© Philip | 2020 | Re: Balance

This little guy is a shield bug and my daughter found him in the garden. I wasn't exactly sure if it'd bite or not, but my daughter picked it up and was playing with him and eventually put him back down again. I'm having a little bit more time to notice things, like this little shield bug.

This is an orange ladybird on a rosebush - there were a few little greenflies and stuff, so we were really happy to see the ladybird. These guys are a little bit unusual, at least in my garden. It's just nice to see them and then I'm happy if they want to eat the greenfly on my roses. One of the things I liked about that photograph was that although it was a slightly wet day, I just like the effect of the drops of water on the leaves.



© Philip | 2020 | Re: Balance



© Raquel | 2020 | Re: Balance

The only thing that's missing here is the sea, which it's opposite. This is St Anne's Park. This is the coast road on St Anne's Park and it was just beautiful. This was around March, around the time we were asked to stay at home, cocooning. This was the most amazing sunset I think I've seen.



© Raquel | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is taken from Clontarf, one of the places I enjoy the most walking. Amazing. Unfortunately, it's more than 2K from my house, so I'm confined to walk around the block around here now and I can't take my pictures of the sea, but I'm just waiting for the government to lift a bit of the measures so I can actually go back and walk around Bull Island. I used to live there, so that's why this place is really special for me and really like one of the parts of Dublin that I love the most and it has these beautiful sunsets. Something to look forward to.



© Sheila | 2020 | Re: Balance

That's a field behind our house and it has turned into kind of like a recreational park for everybody. There's no park within walking distance of the two kilometres, so literally everybody goes into the estate to this field and the farmer doesn't seem to give a damn. Everybody's running in it. The dogs are walking. Everybody's cutting through it. It's just turned into a recreational amenity and everybody's using it. I think everybody needs to get close to nature. They seem to just turn into that field and walk there. So that's another side of the confinement. I was never in that field and I've lived here 25 years, it's just something on your doorstep. My son was saying that the field was bought and it's being turned into houses or whatever; but nobody seems to have an issue and everybody's using it. I think it is that people need to get to nature. There's beautiful gorse bushes and you just feel you're out far away and it's only five minutes from the house, so it's been a good amenity for me and for most of the neighbours anyway.



© Siobhan | 2020 | Re: Balance

This picture is to remind me how lucky I am because I live two kilometres from the beach and I know there's a lot of people out there that don't get to see this beautiful scenery and hear the sea. I have three dogs and I walk my mum's dog because her little Holly needs to go out. They are a family. This photo was really just to remind me I suppose of how lucky during this lockdown that I can get out to the fresh air and the beach that's two kilometres away.

I can walk the full length of that beach with the dogs and get a decent walk in. Now I walk to the beach, as before, I used to drive, which is literally five minutes. It takes me about a half an hour, 20 minutes to walk to it, so I get more exercise. I'm getting healthier.



© Philip | 2020 | Re: Balance

I live down near Dalkey and I used to cycle into work. It's a habit of exercise, so in a way, it was good for me to move from Bank Centre to Central Park because when I was in Bank Centre, I could be lazy and take the DART. But now that I'm in Central Park, I don't have the option of the DART, so I have to cycle. Even on a bad day, I put on my raingear and head in, and it was nice to have that regular exercise and now working at home I realised well, I'm not really getting that much exercise. I used to jog a lot before my kids were born and I've been getting back into jogging and it's really nice. This is going for an evening jog after dinner and the sea looks really nice and it's a really peaceful thing to do, something I enjoy.

The second photo is the same view, on another day, rather than going for an evening jog, I did a morning jog and this is basically the same spot and it looks completely different. The sun has been up probably for about an hour at that stage and there's a bit more wind, so the water looks different and everything just looks completely different, even though it's basically the same photograph. I just like the change in colours.



Adapting and Coping



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I took this as a representation of my mindset, of how I've adapted to the whole Coronavirus situation. The first few weeks, I was very much in my head, like oh my god, I feel trapped in my apartment. Everything is closing in on me. But I've come through the other side of it now and if I'm working from home till September, it is what it is. I've learned how to keep myself entertained.

I was out on a walk and on the news you're seeing a lot of reports of people not adhering to social distancing rules and, we're more than likely going to be pushed out on Friday for another two weeks. And as I looked at this, I was thinking it's a small stream that travels right down and flows into the Dodder if you follow it long enough. This goes right up all the way down from Marlay to the park near my house and it's a little stream, but it goes a long way. I thought it was similar to how everybody is doing their little part in this whole situation, it leads to something bigger. There's something nice at the end of it and by everybody doing their part, things will get better.

It's just like a switch went off and I just realised that when it gets down to it, I can't change the situation and there is no point in being down about it and complaining. Now, don't get me wrong, it is difficult. You do have your moments of loneliness. Like yesterday, my dad was driving by my apartment on his way home from work, so he stopped off for 15 minutes and was in the car. That's the first time I've seen him in weeks. Moments like that, I'm grateful for a lot more things. But you know, I very much would like to see people again.

I just kind of adjusted. It just happened. Even from a motivational perspective, I was on zero for about three weeks. I'll honestly say I was not driven to do any work. College work was just an effort and I had so many assignments due. I had three of them at one stage. I had no drive to do any of them. I'm after starting a new job this week, so it's a whole new team, a whole new environment. I'm in that kind of place where I'm ready to get my hands dirty and get involved in everything again, so that's another factor that's keeping me like right, this is something new. It's interesting to learn how to do a new job with my team not around. They're finding it funny as well. Normally, you'd be sitting with someone at a desk while they show you how something is done, and integrating. We're doing it over video chat, it's interesting, but it's good and I'm happy.

As history shows, things like this have happened in the past before multiples times and, loss happens, dark times, but and the world has gone through it and made it past and built itself up, and that's just part of life, in the grander scheme.



© Gabriel | 2020 | Re: Balance

I was on my walk, around the estate and one thing I noticed was the overgrown greenery in kind of what was seen as the public spaces. For those with sharp eyesight, in the back, this is a commemorative garden for 1916. It was opened four years ago and is maintained scrupulously throughout the year in the normal course of events. But in these times, it's overgrown and probably the link for me back to what we're going through at the moment is back in 1916, we all know what they went through during 1916 living in Ireland. At the same time, in 1918, they were facing the Spanish flu. I look at this and say yes, it may be overgrown, but I do look on the people who came before us and fought for our freedoms and I think as a society, we are coming together with the technology we have through Zoom and Skype video, to still feel some freedom by being able to link in with family and friends.



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The 25th April is the Freedom Day in Portugal, when our dictatorship ended. Along with Hitler and Mussolini, we had a fascist in Portugal that was our government until 1974, 25th April, when it ended. A lot of people died, were tortured, no freedom of speech, no anything. So for us, it's a big day. It's a national holiday and it's a day to remember. It's a very important day and we celebrate every year, the freedom of speech and everything. What's stated here is 'it's not the pleasure, it's not the glory, it's not the power. It's just the freedom. Only the freedom'. They didn't actually fight, they distributed on that day red carnations. So we call it the Red Carnation Revolution. I don't have carnations in my garden, we were just talking with my parents and my family, Zooming. That's the best we can have in terms of celebrations at the moment.



© Aoife | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is on Camden Street. It's been there I think since I moved to Dublin. One time when my parents were visiting me, my dad commented on it and we looked it up and it's related to the poet Seamus Heaney. When he was on his deathbed, he sent a text to his wife in Latin, and the translation is 'Don't be afraid'. And then I passed it the other day on my walk and thought that's quite relevant to just now. I usually pass that on my way home from Camden Street on a Friday night or early hours on a Saturday morning and don't pay too much attention to it, so to see it in the light of day is nice and actually it means something right now.

This is a tunnel out of my local park, and at certain times of the day there's a beautiful light at the end of the tunnel. So I just took a picture of it one evening, it was particularly nice and I guess the light at the end of the tunnel for me is that I'm a few minutes' walk from my home. I'm going home. I'm going to get my dinner or my lunch or FaceTime family or phone with my friends or read my book. It just makes me think of all the things that are actually going quite well. There's a lot of horrific stories in the news and it's starting to affect people. I'm sure everyone now at this stage, if not themselves, there'll be someone they know has been affected directly by Coronavirus and it's just that idea again, we just need to think of all the things that actually are good just now to try and keep us going.



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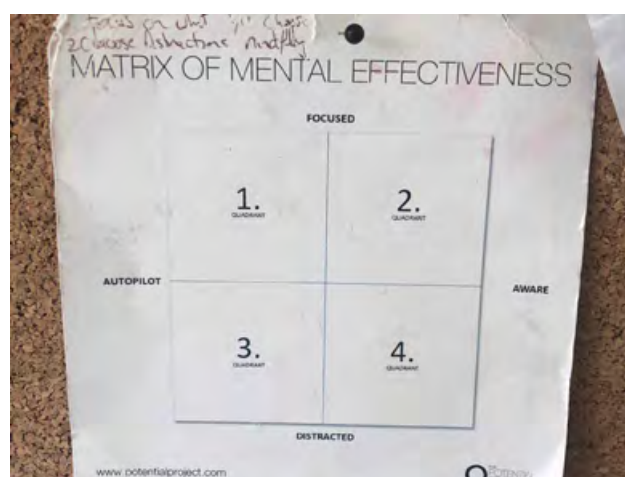
© David | 2020 | Re: Balance

I had a mental health challenge two years ago and probably a lot of it was related to just running too hard and ending up running on empty, which is probably why I'm really enjoying this at the moment. When you're in the middle of it and you're just not understanding why your brain is completely fried, you're kind of looking for things to try and explain it - and I came across stoicism, which I'd never really paid any attention to before at all and this is from the writings going right back to the Roman Empire days of Marcus Aurelius and others.

I just really liked this list, because stoicism is all about living in the present, you could die in your sleep tonight, so there's no point in worrying about the past and no point worrying about the future, just live in the day.

There's a whole series of ideas about living in the moment and do it if you're going to do it - how many of us say well, I really must, write that book or you know, sing that song? It's been funny because poetry was something I used to do an awful lot when I was a teenager - and you keep on thinking oh, I don't have time, but I've just started again. So the whole idea of, you know, if you're going to do it, do it resonates with me. Just get on with it. Just start, whatever it might be. It doesn't matter if it's not very good or if you fail at it.

This is just a very nice little tool that comes from a company called Potential Project, it's the whole idea of just staying focused and avoiding distractions and being in the now. Mindfulness is definitely a theme for me at this time. I've only really come back to it in a big way over the last five or six weeks because we've suddenly got time to think about it and realise just how important it is to ground yourself.



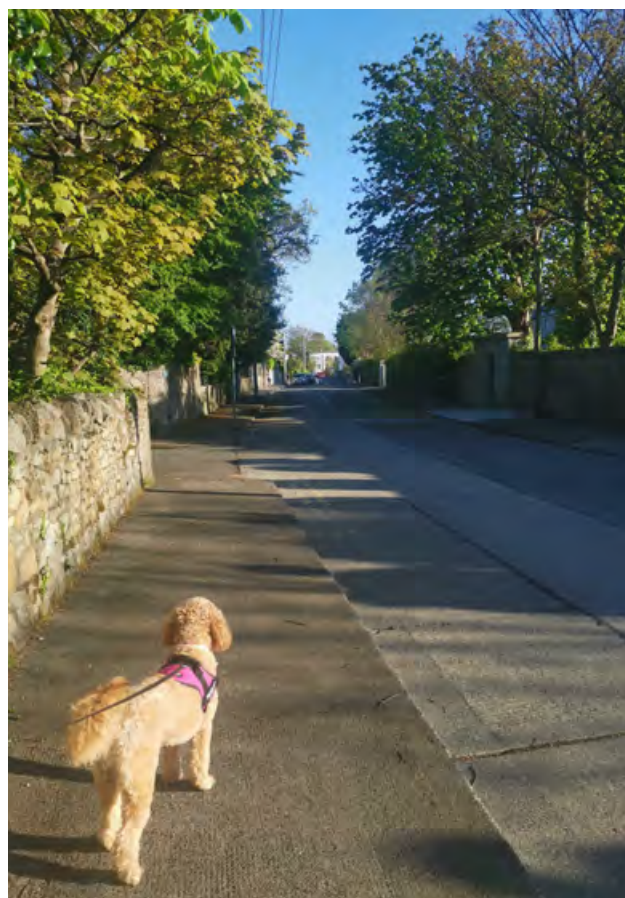
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© Aswini | 2020 | Re: Balance

The picture is the yoga mat or the exercise mat. That is one of the things to just relieve stress in myself. I do some exercise in the morning. I don't do that usually because my mornings are packed. I do a one and a half hour commute each way to work, so I get up early in the morning, make sure I leave on time, otherwise I will not get parking, all those things. But this is one good thing which happened because of this isolation.

This photo was taken around eight o'clock on a weekday morning, and usually this road would be full of people and heavy traffic. So I quite like the peace and quiet of going out now. There's nobody out, the weather is good and I'm enjoying doing that every morning before I start work.

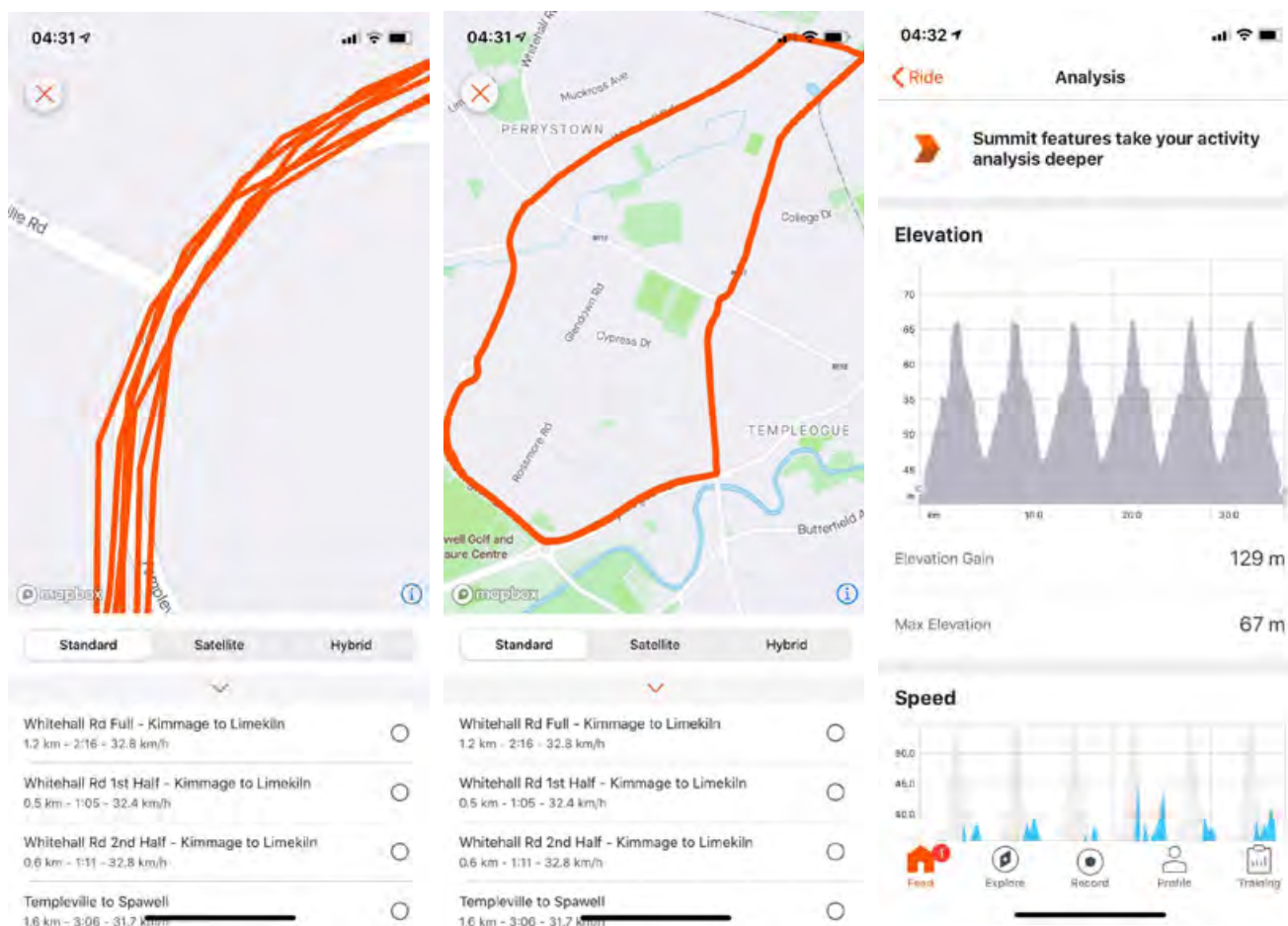


© Hazel | 2020 | Re: Balance



© Sheila | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is myself and my dog. I'm finding that I'm spending an awful lot of time walking the dog and I'm seeing her shadow everywhere. The sun always seems to be shining and as I was walking back from my walk I took this photo because it's a big part of my day. The dog gets me out. Generally I walk her in the morning after say our first call. I just bring her round the block, she's one of the main beneficiaries of the confinement I think - she's never on her own and always very happy. I love walking her and I just love the sunshine. I would be a very outdoor person. I'd be most of my life outside if I had a choice rather than inside. I'd always be walking her; but I've found because she's a bit older and she can't really go for long walks, I find walking her doesn't give me the exercise I want. So probably for the first time, I've started to walk on my own as well. I walk her and then in the evening time, I go for a really long walk. She's just not able for a long walk, but I wouldn't have had the time to start going for those really long walks in the evening if I was on the M50 coming home. By the time I'd get home, it'd be far later. When I finish work now, I'd often just go for a long walk before I'd head into the evening.



© John | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is just about mental health really - this is me on the bike. It's a screen dump from Strava and it's showing that I did the loop six times, so it's the repetitive element of it, trying to stay within the two-kilometre radius, but also, just getting out, exercising, getting out of the house and trying to keep the head in the right place.

It's starting to get a little bit more monotonous, I guess. I'd always be trying on the bike to push it a bit, so I'd be looking at the clock and making sure and looking at the time I'm doing, just to make sure that I'm pushing it. I'm in pure exercise mode but yes, it is starting to get repetitive. To be honest, I'm just grateful to get out, get a bit of fresh air and we're all so lucky that the weather has been amazing. Imagine if it was lashing over the last month or so. I think people's heads would be wrecked.



© Dec | 2020 | Re: Balance

Life on Mars.

At the moment, it feels so alien where we are and they are my ways of getting through it, Kindle, music, coffee, lots of coffee and my vape.



© Aoife | 2020 | Re: Balance

Another part of my isolation daily life is food - making food and my latest quest is trying to do sourdough. So this is my sourdough starter, which I'm trying to feed each day, but I've not got high hopes. It doesn't seem to be bubbling the way it's meant to be, so watch this space.

...I finally got my first loaf of sourdough out of my starter - I put 10 days' work into the sourdough starter, feeding it each day. There's a little bakery in Dublin, they've put a day-by-day guide to making it up on their Instagram page, and they've put up loads of photos and tips and stuff. So I've been following that and like some of the things, they were saying, like 'So you should be seeing this today and it should be bubbling and you should see a rise' – and I wasn't seeing anything like that, and I was like, 'Oh god, I've put 10 days spooning in and out flour and weighing water'. But I got this loaf out of it and the joy it brought to me was unbelievable. I was like oh my god, what has my life become? I'm so happy about bread. But you kind of get to go back to basics and do something that you probably wouldn't have had the time or the patience to do before when everyone was so busy. So it's actually been quite nice and quite rewarding as well. I think making that bread was a lot more enjoyable than going to stand in a queue outside Aldi and worrying about people being too close to me.

And once I sliced it, the way I had been holding it, it kind of looked like a love heart...I thought it just kind of looks like a love heart of bread, so I thought that was quite fitting.



© Eoin | 2020 | Re: Balance

I've been doing a lot of cooking. I've always liked cooking, but I've gotten so much more into it over the last while and it's really keeping me preoccupied in the evening. On Monday night I had made macaroni and cheese, which I love it, but I've never actually made it from scratch for myself. I didn't know how to make it, so this is like an adventure for me. I ended up going out and buying enough cheese to feed a family. I had three bags of cheese in it and a block of gruyere cheese that I've never used before. I ended up with this big massive, massive dish of it. So I had put a picture of it up on my Instagram, as I was cooking it, and when it came out done, I was like look, I've loads of food - if anyone wants some, hit me up. And one of my friends actually texted me; 'I'm driving over to get some'. I had made brownies too over the weekend, and they are underneath the mac and cheese. I had stacked them up into takeaway dishes that I had left over and we just dropped it into the car. I just thought this is the definition of what's going on. You'd be actually to the point where we're putting food into dishes for people to come over and collect it.



© Siobhan | 2020 | Re: Balance

I miss my interaction with people in general, especially my family. This is my two sisters. My sister in the middle has just recovered from breast cancer, so we're very protective of not getting close to her. She's very protective, wearing of gloves and whatever. We all have gloves. We're not wearing them right there, but any time we needed to, we quickly put the gloves back on, and we definitely kept the two metres apart. We're there with my brother-in-law as well, and I had the four dogs. So it was kind of about how do I connect? This photo was more about, how do you stay connected?

Between Zoom calls and this social distance walk. We hadn't seen each other for about a month... I met them up their side of Bray, and we were out for three hours just walking around. There was hardly anyone around, and we kept our two metres distance. That's how I'm staying connected with people.



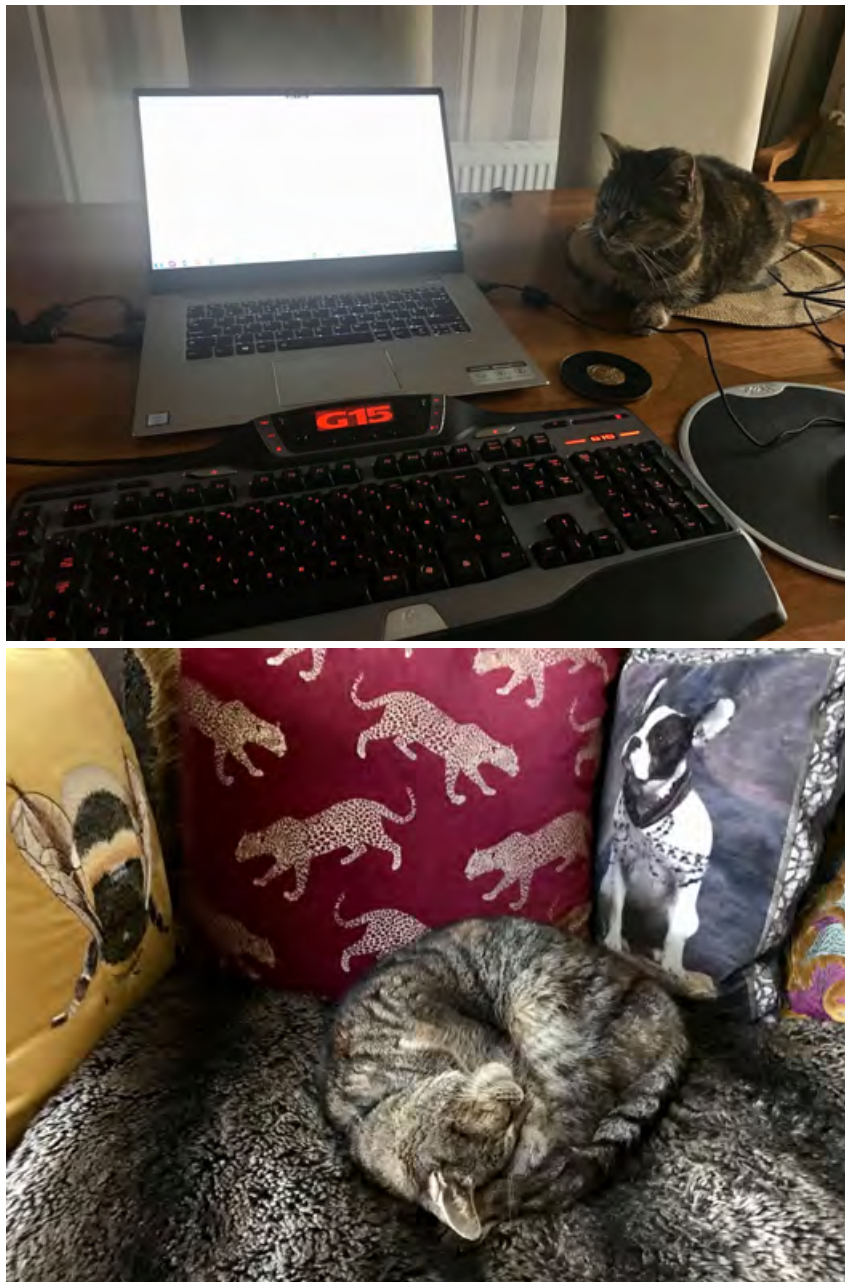
© Eileen | 2020 | Re: Balance

My anthem for the lockdown. Who's Zooming who? Yes, it's great. I love the connectivity, the fact that people can.... you know, we're getting good at actually connecting when we are distant and the whole thing about nature healing and all the rest of it, there has to be positives out of this. We have to get better and not come back the way we were.



© John | 2020 | Re: Balance

I think there were two different Thursdays where it was, you know, a round of applause for the frontline staff... that's the entry door to the house, to the courtyard. And we've got three candles that we normally light it in the evening, have a glass of wine or something like that over the weekend. We lit it on Thursday and I lifted it up there just as an appreciation and then I think it was about eight o'clock or nine o'clock, we went outside and there was a massive round of applause and we went chatting to the neighbours and there was a real kind of niceness and simplicity to what people were doing and a real kindness and just a really good feeling about taking that time out to think about what good is happening in the world and the efforts that our frontline staff are making for us. It was a really good 15, 20 minutes with the neighbours having the chat and just real positive vibes.



© Gabriel | 2020 | Re: Balance

I had never worked from home until lockdown started, so I had to get up and running with a laptop. This is not my cat, this is a neighbour's cat from three doors up and her name is Tinkerbell and she's just taken it upon herself to come in and sit beside me during the day as I'm on the laptop. She has accidentally walked on the laptop keypads and I don't know what texts or emails she's sent, but I am an animal lover by nature and seeing her there while I'm working away would lift anybody's spirits. She is another win-win for me in working from home.

She's currently in the living room fast asleep. And she literally sits on these cushions surrounding her and what they just remind me of, working from home... it's kind of therapeutic kind to be able to see the cat fast asleep, impervious to any Coronavirus that's out there, it does me the power of good. When I'm working away, I can just look in and say yes, she's fast asleep at the moment. She's been asleep since nine this morning and I think again, it's like a psychological thing for me... Once she's asleep, I'm more than content just to be working away.



© Janet | 2020 | Re: Balance

We had a fun get-together last Thursday evening and one of the things we did was a virtual pub crawl. These are coasters that I had, so you can do the little virtual pub crawl of all the popular pubs in Dublin. We can all dream, you know. It was just a bit of fun really.

In terms of connecting with people via Zoom etc, I'm finding it ok. That particular evening I had two Zoom calls that ended up going on until 11:30, so my whole evening was gone. The second one was with some friends and, you know, we go out sometimes and of course, it's a gaggle of women and it's all blah, blah, blah. When we go out, we normally go for dinner and you tend to chat to maybe two or three people that are sitting near you at the table. But actually, we found that on Zoom, we could have a really good conversation. All of us could talk to each other and you could see everybody and we all caught up. And we haven't been out for ages, so it was actually a great catch-up.



© John | 2020 | Re: Balance

We're all working from home, the kids can't go to creche. I've got two kids. A daughter who's three, and a son who's one and they're fairly active, so it's trying to build, it's even difficult to try and build a bit of routine, but myself and my wife have been trying to. This is Joe Wicks live every morning, so that's definitely part of the routine. It's good to get some of the morning enthusiasm out of the children and hopefully they have their afternoon naps and the like. It's part of the routine now and it's pretty good. It's good for all of us and it's a bit of family time as well.



© David | 2020 | Re: Balance



This was virtual camping. 40 Cubs virtually camped out on Saturday night and did a campsite and we had a campfire and all of that as well. That's our equipment - my middle girl is in the Cubs, but everybody else then got their gear and went out into the back garden as well.

It was brilliant. What the kids loved the most was when 40 of them were taken off mute and allowed chat to each other for 15 minutes and catch up as well. So that was great. I think they just loved seeing each other and realising that they're all still around.

My youngest is in the Beaver Scouts, so we're doing another virtual camp with them this weekend - that'll be 30 of them. They're six to eight years old, so holding their attention over Zoom and things is going to be harder, but we're going to do a scavenger hunt. They'll have to find things around the house and bring them back and we'll do a campfire song and a few other bits and pieces as well.



© Raquel | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is a Post-it my daughter left me. I get every now and then some of this, so it makes me happy. I have been posting throughout these 45 days on Instagram, and this is what I posted yesterday saying these are the things that make my world big, my heart full and my life worthy. This is what actually makes me happy and makes this all bearable.



The Unexpected Upsides



© Gabriel | 2020 | Re: Balance

This clock personifies something that I would never have seen in all my working days, both in Central Park and even before when we were in Burlington Road. I've always been an early starter and in Central Park, I was going into work, getting up at a quarter to six. Here's me getting up at a quarter to nine, just coming out of the shower to log on downstairs for a nine o'clock meeting. To me, this is a big benefit. I've taken to working from home like a duck to water and I'm getting three hours' extra sleep, which means I can stay up late at night to watch Trump's presidential news conferences! So it's a whole new experience and while yes, I would be an early bird naturally, now working from home, I've adapted and it suits me. Ten to nine, coming out of the shower is perfect for me.

When we do return to Central Park, I've already agreed with my line manager; I will be working from home for at least two days. I know with a phased return to work, possibly in the short to medium-term, we may be having to work from home three to four days initially and it won't be a full return to Central Park until either vaccine or drug is found, but definitely I will now be working from home where I can going forward.



© Siobhan | 2020 | Re: Balance

This photo I would title Measurement of Time. What I mean by that is over the past four weeks, I find myself in the morning going, 'What day is it?'. I find myself saying to my mum, 'What day is it today?' And she would say, 'I'm so glad you said that, because I thought it was just me!'. I have heard other people saying it because time has totally changed or my perception of time has changed. Your days go into one, your weekend is here and there's not much that changes, even though we're getting more structured.

I've actually done a lot more with my day. I've learned to cook fresh food, you do so much more and you've just got so much more time because you really realise now what's important to you. It's kind of stripped back. It's not all about work. You live in your headspace, it's all about work and all of a sudden, I can see what goes on with my dogs... what they do during the day. You can observe a lot more about what's going on around you.



© Gabriel | 2020 | Re: Balance

I am the cook in the house, but when I used be commuting from Central Park, even though I would be finishing off around three, half three most days to avoid the rush hour commute home, I would be seen as a flash cooker. Whatever I can do, I will cook, yes, fresh ingredients, but I'll do it very fast and, if I am going for burgers, they won't be fancy burgers, but they will be probably butcher bought burgers.

However, now that I am at home, I can take a break during the day and a couple of weeks ago, I made my own homemade burgers with my herbs and my onions and various ingredients and got my hands nice and messy and made them into burgers that everybody loved. So that's something that again, for me, has been a benefit. I love to cook and be able to have the chance to do a full dinner, everything from the raw ingredients from start to finish, really kind of gives me a time-out. And I have no problem now logging on again, be it at six o'clock for an hour to finish off the day, such as any late emails, because I've had that big break in the day of an hour prepping and maybe an hour sitting down with the family for dinner. So that kind of signifies to me being able to make food and sit down with the family and just enjoy the time we have together.



© Sheila | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is a photo of my breakfast. I suppose that's the highlight of the day for me and the biggest positive that has come from the whole change because I'm living in Drogheda and obviously Central Park is a long way away from that. So I find commuting on the M50 just to be totally against everything that I believe in with cars and streams of traffic and everything and I absolutely hate it. So to be able to actually get up in the morning and just make a relaxing breakfast and know that I don't have to get in the car and go anywhere is very positive, or drag reluctant teenagers to school, which is often the case on the days I do work from home. I find breakfast way more relaxing and I really enjoy it now, so that's one of the real positives for me is just relaxing in the morning and having a decent breakfast and not having to rush anywhere or know I have to be anywhere.

That morning stress is gone. AIB are excellent with regards me working at home and there's been absolutely no issues. I do a four-day week and two of them have always been at home since we moved to Central Park and I work in Heuston for one day a week and then I work in Central Park another. I think what's another positive is when I used to work those two days at home, I was probably the only one on my team at home, whereas the rest of them are all in the office. So you may have no contact with your actual team that day because I'm working on a lot of projects that may not be associated with the team, whereas now when I'm at home, my day starts at 9am, but because everybody's at home, we have a call at 9am. So there's more connection with the actual team, which I found positive, because the days that I was traditionally working from home, I may not get a call from my team because they're all doing their own thing in Central Park.



© Danielle | 2020 | Re: Balance

I took this photo to send to my sister. My parents have never been on the same schedule. My dad was a barman, then he was a security man, now he's a taxi driver that gets up at four in the morning. With the restrictions, he doesn't do that at the moment. At the moment, he's working with Mum in SuperValu to deliver shopping that Mum picks. So Mum and Dad now have a more similar schedule – this was Mum's day off, and Dad was working, and I had woken up to this. I'd realised Dad had set up everything for Mum for her coffee in the morning and I thought it was just the sweetest thing. Mum and Dad have never had the same schedule. They've never done anything like that and they've never had time. They had four kids and I just thought they now actually have all these little moments where they can hang out together. They can talk. They have time before and after work where they didn't before and I can see it and it was just really nice - I wanted to take a picture of that and I sent it to my sister. We never see them do stuff like that and we realised because they never could and at the moment, the way everything has worked out, it's calmed everything down. There's not as much of a rush. Dad's not going out at four in the morning or bed at six o'clock to be up at two, going out to the airport to pick someone up, so they have that time together and I just thought it was really something that they wouldn't have had before and it was kind of nice. It was a glimpse of what they'll have maybe in a few years.

We're not all rushing somewhere. We don't have a tick-box list of activities that we have to do. We have to be at home and I'm quite grateful for it.



© Gabriel | 2020 | Re: Balance

This represents what I never would do in work. In work, I just go in, I have coffee, coffee, coffee, coffee, that's it, whereas now at home, I am getting up and I'm having breakfast in the morning, having toast. Even taking proper breaks from the laptop, I am finding this beneficial. Though I still think when I am back in Central Park, I will be back to work, work, coffee, coffee.



© Siobhan | 2020 | Re: Balance

This photograph is me being creative with my time. This is me attempting to make sushi, it's a starter kit from Tesco's. I'm a big seafood fan, so I always have these seafood sticks and prawns and salmon and god knows what. I've got a lot of stuff because I've been to Asia, all over, so I bring home a lot of these little things, the utensils etc. It went well, it went very well.

I rolled enough to make 18 pieces and about 12 worked. But it was really good. So the point is that I'm now experimenting with food that I didn't make before. I now have more fresh vegetables. I'm on a four-week challenge where I'm eating healthy and doing fitness. I'm feeling absolutely great. So the fact that I'm feeling very healthy and have time to do the likes of this, it's opened up a whole new paradigm for me, whereas before, it was all about work, work, work.



© David | 2020 | Re: Balance

One of the big things about 'the lockdown' has been the increased amount of downtime (outside of working hours) - we have three children, 14, 11 and eight. It's usually very busy because all of them do at least four or five activities – so that's 15 different things and then most of the activities involve two days of training plus a match. So I think we're ferrying them around to minimum 35 different places, and going in different directions every week. And it's all stopped, and it's been fantastic because, well, you can see the five bikes here because we now get out every day together - we get out for our government mandated walk at 5:30 every day and the kids are coming along.

I've a daughter who is 14, so I'd say the last time we all used to go out for a walk was probably when our youngest was a little baby, until he was two or three in a buggy. We haven't done it since and now we're doing it and we were saying it's probably our last time with our teenager because she'll be past the point of wanting to go out with her parents. It's been brilliant and every day, we've gotten out. We have three different routes. So we've got our 5K, our 7K and our 3.5K routes we live near two parks and a beach and it's just amazing to be able to get out every day, around them.



© Philip | 2020 | Re: Balance

We've a trampoline and the kids get enormous use out of it. This is just the view from under the trampoline - they've got great use out of it and they've just been jumping up and down and bouncing around. Lots of exercise, lots of fun. I join them - we do different games on it... and it's just, again, that idea that there certainly have been some positives to this lockdown. Having the kids in the garden, I guess for me, the big story of this is just interacting with my wife and kids.

We've got two kids, so they can play with each other and they get on quite well. They're normal children, so there's squabbles, there's tears, but they recover from their little squabble pretty quick and there's a lot more laughter than tears. My daughter's only eight. It's perhaps easier at that age than the teenage years, so she's quite happy just to play with her little brother and they jump on the trampoline in the garden and they're doing different homework activities and stuff. Some aspects are not great, particularly for my daughter; she'd naturally spend some time with friends and now it's just a few video calls. But actually overall, it's pretty good - they've just got lots of quality time with both their parents right now.

We let our daughter completely bake a cake herself. I was there more as a safety officer than anything. From taking out the recipe we just let her, rather than just follow someone, we just let her do the whole thing herself and it worked out. It worked out really very well. She picked out the recipe herself. She got the ingredients herself. She turned on the oven herself. I stayed in the room just to make sure she didn't take her finger off with an egg-beater.



© Philip | 2020 | Re: Balance



© Danielle | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is my boyfriend, we're in his back garden. We order lunch now once or twice a week or we'll order dinner... I was working that day, he was working that day. I went up for an hour for lunch and, I'd never laughed so much on a lunch break and I just thought it was really nice that we had that opportunity that we'd never had before to have lunch together when we're both working... and it was just really nice to be able to do that. It was just something we'd never done. We were out of doors. We're able to have moments like that now, not just with my boyfriend, but with my mum and dad. I see them throughout the day or I call some of my friends on a lunch break and you're allowed have that few minutes a day where you would never have thought of it before because you were running to lunch before you run to a meeting, before you do this and... I find time now is very social. It's not just about getting it done. You get jobs done. You might have more time, but it's that you get to make that little connection throughout the day that you might have been too busy for before.



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She's my new mischievous little work colleague – when I'm on a call she'll see something out the window and start barking. When I put her out of the room she sits outside the door waiting to get back in. During lockdown I love being at home with her - I always felt guilty leaving her when I did go to Central Park in the morning. She won't know what's hit her when I do eventually go back. She uplifts my mood and some days, when I'm not really in the mood to go for a walk at lunch, she motivates me to get outside.



© Siobhan | 2020 | Re: Balance

In terms of what about this time, this 'new normal', would I like to keep and that I am loving - this photo is to remind me that actually I'm getting a lot more exercise from being at home, I get a lot more exercise now and I've started a fitness regime where my gym are doing a challenge and that makes you eat healthy and do some exercises and you've to go out for walks and so forth. So I'm actually keeping myself fit and healthy.

I have four cavaliers. I own three of them and my mum owns the little female there on the left. It's the mother and her litter, and I bring them for the walks every day. They are loving the walks, and this is what I would keep. I did do walks when I was working in Central Park, but some days, I go home and go, 'Do you know what? I think I'll just have a glass of wine'. Even though I knew I probably should get out and walk the dog, it was more the weekends that I did it. I did it once or twice during the week, but now they're out every day and it's got to a point now where Bailey, who is the little guy on the right-hand side, the Blenheim, he actually starts barking at my computer at three o'clock because he knows I finish at three. He'll stand there and bark until I have to say, 'hang on, hang on'. Because you know the way you always want to do another half an hour. He's actually now getting to a point where he's clawing my hand off the keyboard because it's his time now. It's very funny. If we ever go back to Central Park, I think I'm going to bring Bailey with me! So that's what I'd keep.



© Raquel | 2020 | Re: Balance

These were some of my Christmas presents which I have had time now to actually sit and read, which is something I like and usually I read a bit on the Luas. I have a long commute. Usually it's an hour 15 minutes to an hour and a half each way, so it's about two and a half hours, three hours of my day gone. I take the DART, then I walk and then I take the Luas. So it has been really good to have my time back and actually I have been reading, and the other thing is having time to get back to walking. So having time to walk, and catch-up on my books, which makes me really happy.



© David | 2020 | Re: Balance

Myself, and my 14-year-old daughter are reading these books at the moment and that's been the other great thing of this time - instead of reading business books or self-improvement or any of that stuff, it's just been purely for pleasure. It's a really brilliant series. I just finished the last of the three this morning. And that's been really nice because the two of us have got to read the same thing at the same time, and we've just had loads of time to do it and it's been brilliant.

That's my dad's leather chair. Which is probably about 50 or 60 years old. If I wake up too early in the morning or I wake up during the night, I'll quite often come down now and sit and read and those books have been good for that.

I don't really know how old it is. He fought out in Burma and India in World War II, so it might even have been shipped back with all his stuff right the way back from then as well. I have pictures of the kids at various stages when they were younger sitting in it - they could all fit together in it and I just remember as a kid myself and my brother watching television sitting in it.



© John | 2020 | Re: Balance

I was around the park looking at good photo opportunities because it was all around us and then the sun was on my back and just having a lovely family day out and you could hear the birds. I just saw my own reflection there and it was like actually just take a moment to enjoy this time because we mightn't have something similar again and be grateful for all the good things in life. So that was just a simple depiction of that.



© Danielle | 2020 | Re: Balance

The one thing that struck me through all this is my whole family, everything we do, even myself, we make ourselves busy. We're always going somewhere, doing something and the one thing I've really enjoyed about this, is it's very quiet. I live with my parents, and just before this, before COVID-19 happened, my brother moved out with his girlfriend and they had been living here for a while. My other brother, only a few months before that, had moved out. My sister is staying with her boyfriend, so the house is very quiet and we've always had lots of people in the house. We've all lived at home until recently and it's always manic, whereas now it's really quiet. I keep trying to capture that in a photo.

For this photo I decided for the first time to take out the giant fancy camera that I have because I couldn't do it with my phone. I wanted more light to come in, I thought I would try and show the setting of how idyllic it is at the moment for me, but it didn't really work. But it actually came out really nice and as soon as I took it, I went oh wow, that's what happens when you let more light in. And I went oh, that's a bit poignant. All that orange light, it's just from having the shutter open longer and it made this really beautiful, weird contrast and I really like it.

At the moment, everything is quite good for my family. It's given us a break. It's given us peace. And that's something that I keep feeling every night when I'm out for a walk. It's this crystal clear peace and tranquillity. Because the light was let in a bit more and maybe that's what COVID did for us. It's allowed us to let a little bit more light in through all the hectic stuff.



© Danielle | 2020 | Re: Balance

I keep trying to capture the stillness of how quiet it is at night, this is a Saturday night, and I can't seem to get it, but that's what this photo tries to show. It was a really nice evening and it was so quiet. I've never seen a Saturday night at 10 o'clock, when it's this quiet. You couldn't hear a car. You can't hear anything. There's just nothing. And it's not an eerie silence. It's just this really beautiful surreal nothing and I've never had that. Not in Rathfarnham, certainly not in town. This was me trying to capture that, and I couldn't really.





The Losses and Challenges



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Man in the Middle

With apologies to Michael Jackson, I call this one 'Man in the Middle' as opposed to 'Man in the Mirror'. Man in the middle of no one. That cushion was bought for me by the grandkids, but there's nobody sitting either side of me or sitting on my lap, so there's not much point in sitting there in the middle. So that's the loneliness aspect of it, I suppose. Every time I've looked at that cushion over the last six weeks, it's something that's struck me, you know. Oh, we have video calls and what have you with them most days, but still, you just want to grab a hold of them, throw them in the air, tickle them, roll around the floor with them, whatever.



© Aoife | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is a little card that my sister sent to me. I live in an apartment and I've never seen the table at the front door where the post is kept so full of letters and parcels and there's constantly a DPD delivery guy coming in and out. And my sister sent me this little card. The quote is actually a quote from a book that my grandad wrote. He passed away at the start of this year, so she's just been reading his book, which goes through the months of the year. It's all about farming, growing up in rural Ireland on a farm, my grandad wrote about his life growing up.

I've put it on my windowsill and it's actually just next to little seedlings that, again, I never usually would have had time to sit down and actually think should I try and grow something? I planted a little packet of wildflower seeds, so hopefully when they come up, I can put them out in my garden and there'll be some butterflies and bees there as well. The description on the bit from the book that my sister included on the letter, I've related to it a lot. I feel like I've noticed the seasons changing a lot more this year than I would have previously and almost to the same level of detail that my grandad has managed to write about in his book.

So I'm just feeling quite connected to my family that way, even though we're writing letters to each other and not that physically close. I would usually go home maybe once a month and someone from Scotland would always be over. Our house is like an Airbnb at times. We've always got a visitor. So it's been quite difficult to adapt to just not knowing when you will be able to go home next, especially because the UK is in a much worse state than it is here in Dublin just now. So the next time that I would actually be able to safely go home and then be able to come back to Ireland is kind of an unknown, so it's quite nice to get little pick me ups in the post like that.



© Raquel | 2020 | Re: Balance

These are a few flowers, in my front yard and my back yard. I'm not Irish, and I lived most of my life in an apartment, which is very normal for us. Being here and actually having a front yard and a back yard and having the flowers, it's nice and when the flowers start blooming, it's just amazing. Nature coming out, all these beautiful colours and with the sunshine it's all around here. As I look out of my window I can see the tree and it's just a really different view. The good side of being home and having a garden and having a bit of space means that we can go outside without going out, which is safer.

The other part of that is I don't have my family near here. I cannot fly and I cannot go home. We do some calls. I have a big family and I speak with my parents every day, which we already did, but it's not the same. The worrying about them, worrying that if something happens, I won't be able to be there. It adds another layer to things. It's good to have my own space here, but... not being there with my parents, you are always worrying and thinking about what if.



© Siobhan | 2020 | Re: Balance

This photo represents what do I miss... I'm very positive. I do love to work from home. I will certainly not be the first person to go back to the office once it opens. I'm very happy to be here, but just on the flip side, I wanted to answer the question, what do I miss? And it came to me that it's my freedom – that would be the big thing that I would categorise as missing. I do a lot of hiking. I've done Kilimanjaro, Machu Picchu. I love the great outdoors, I just love, you know, the earth and just walking around and being up in the mountains, you know, in that quiet, you know, just nature, back to nature where you just walk for hours, four or five, six hours, no problem. I miss the freedom to go up the mountains. I live in Bray, so the Wicklow Mountains are all around me. Unfortunately, even Bray Head is over the two kilometres away.

The other thing that I miss is my choices. I miss the choice to go shopping when I want. A plug on my new computer broke and I had to go onto eBay and get it delivered, which took a few weeks. I needed a keyboard. That took another number of days. I miss the choices of if I just want to run out to any shop and buy something. Maybe it's just the way that we are, things we want immediately whereas now, we have to be a little bit more creative about how we get things.

I miss my independence, and part of my independence I was thinking about is, you know, I miss being able to travel as far and wide as I want to, and it's even more than two kilometres to see my family. I'd two holidays cancelled. I don't know if I'm going to get to Annapurna in October and I miss, just being able to travel and my independence.



© Dec | 2020 | Re: Balance

Road to Nowhere.

That's the gate out and it was a pretty awful day. It had been raining overnight and just the drabness sort of encapsulated how I was feeling about not being able to go anywhere.

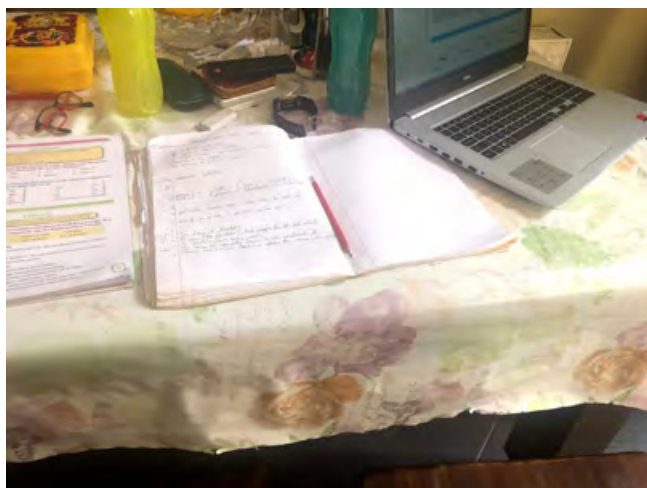


© Dec | 2020 | Re: Balance

Social Distancing – Ask Me Bullocks... He's Just Heard That The Lockdown's Been Extended

I just caught them at one stage where they were all crowding. I think there was a shower due at that stage, so they'd all gathered in together and they were all sitting down very relaxed looking. You'd often see the majority of them sitting down whenever there's rain due.

The bull is the brown one. Looking worn out. So I decided he was miserable rather than worn out. I suppose that was what I was trying to convey, to a certain extent. It is starting to drag now at this stage. I think I was off the field once last week in the whole week, and that was just a run down to the local shop. So it's that sort of feeling of oh, exhaustion with it all, being fed up with it.



© Aswini | 2020 | Re: Balance

It's really stressful. You're not just doing your own work – you have to be a cook, a teacher, a worker, and an employee, everything at home. So the first picture just says that when I'm working, I have to get the homework done for my kids as well.

This road leads to one of the primary schools here. The road was just empty at 8.30am, that's one of the busiest times for the road for school drops. So you can see it in two different ways. One is that the road is empty, which means less pollution, less noise and all those things, but the other side is that I am missing the busy life. Though there are things that you can do in the not so busy life, you know, the routine is missing a lot. So you get up at the same time in the morning, get the kids up at the same time, send them to school at the same time and then you start your work, that routine is missing a lot. So the only thing I can do, even though I can't go back to the same routine, is just try to stick to the routine as much as I can, at least for myself, even if not for the family. But believe me, it is not easy.



© Luciana | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is my baby, he was one on the 17th April and he's teething at the moment, so it is a nightmare during the day. He wants to stay with us all the time. He doesn't want to play. It's been hard to work because you have to hold him and I can't type. I can't do anything. So that time I got him to sleep was in the afternoon, I think, for about 40 minutes. And then I just sat in our bedroom on the floor, because I knew he was going to last only for 40 minutes. I just sat down, did what I had to do. My husband works from home as well. We just have to work and to mind him at the same time. It's been really tough... it's been challenging. If you ask me, I'm exhausted.

It's just he wants to be with us and I understand that. Like I want to be with him as well, but at the same time, you have work to do. So I start early. I had to stay yesterday one hour in the evening to catch up on everything and I woke up one hour earlier today just to do work because I knew I wouldn't be able to do it during the day. I start at half seven, but today I was up at half six at the computer.

That's how I work at the moment, trying to. I still breastfeed, so I think this is a challenge because he knows I'm here and then he knows it's nap time and nap time during the day is when I feed him.... and that's my dog on the side, snoozing for 20 hours a day. That's what he does.



© Raquel | 2020 | Re: Balance

Like everybody else, I'm doing a lot of baking. In my pictures, I tried to get the bright side of things, so the cooking, the enjoying family. But I'm the only adult in the house. I have to wash everything after, so I have a lot of mommy work to do, which is not easy sometimes. The kids just eat the cookies and go away to do their thing and then the whole mess in the kitchen just stays there. The good part is that we all have a lot more time to cook together. Both of my kids, they like to cook and to bake, so we have been doing a lot of that, which is good. We usually have dinner together every day, and now we also have lunch. That means a lot more tidy-up, and cleaning the kitchen a lot more times during the day. It's an amazing opportunity for me to wash a lot more dishes!... which I wasn't exactly looking for, but it's part of the deal, I guess.



© Janet | 2020 | Re: Balance

I called this photo the domestic goddess. Well, by Jesus, if I have to wash one more stupid pot or dish or baking tray and sieve - honestly, it's just endless. I've a dishwasher and we wash all the dishes in that, but all those big things, we always handwash. I've two sinks they are constantly chock-a-block with dishes - pots, pans, tins, baking trays. It's not all glamorous.





Reconsidering Responsibility



© Janet | 2020 | Re: Balance

This was the Saturday night when we all had the candles burning for the front-line workers – the medical workers, shop workers, cleaners, all the people that really we never gave any thought to before and suddenly they're so important in our lives. This is just literally a picture of two candles outside the door. Our road was lit up completely. It was just beautiful - people taking the time out to think about, to actually appreciate others, because I think so often, you don't appreciate them. You just get on with it. Many of these are the lowest paid among us all and they do such a valuable service.



© Eileen | 2020 | Re: Balance

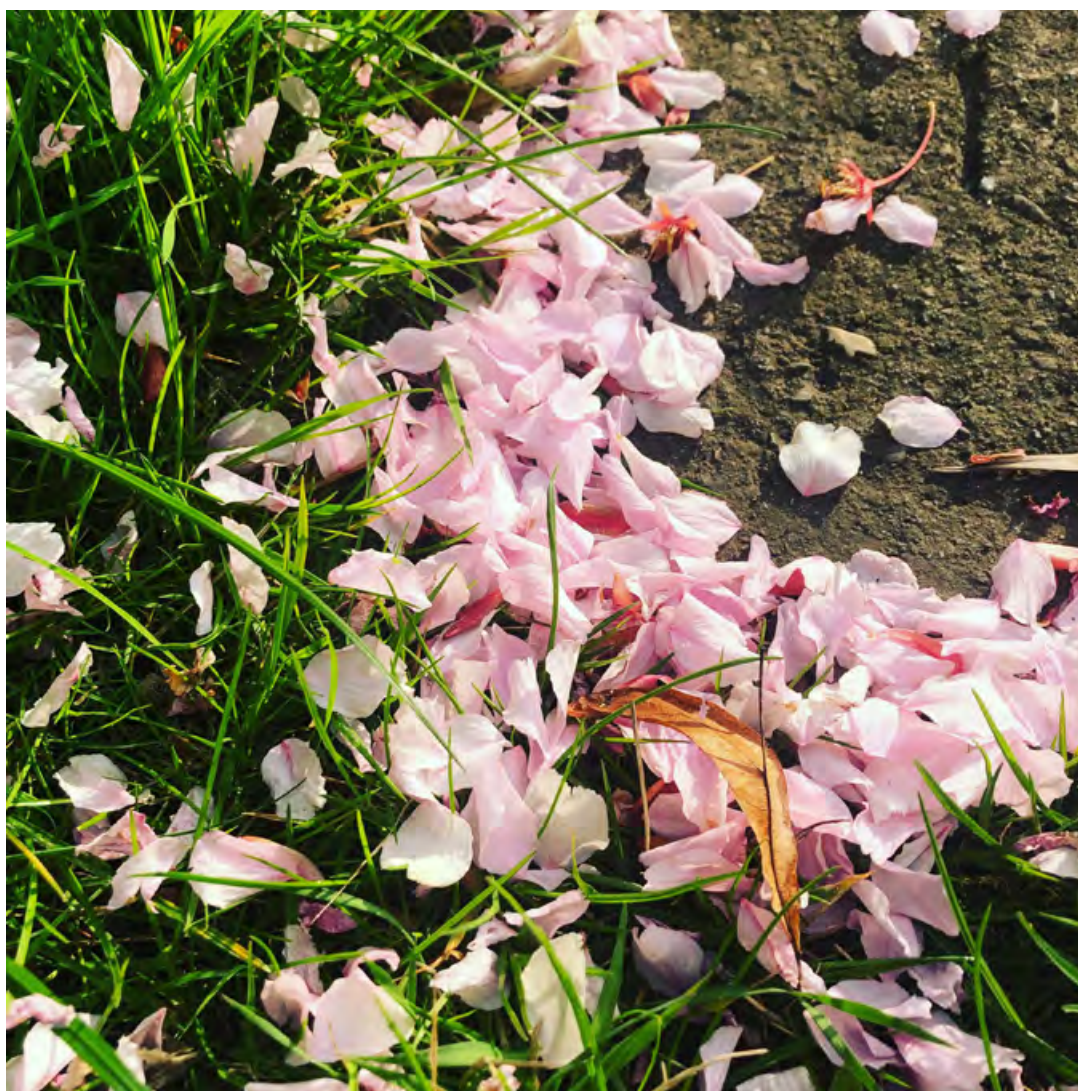
This is a photo of my dirty stairs. So it represents two things. I had actually used it for my exercise. I'd gone up and down it five times that day, so it was my training track. But it was also that we got a cleaner a few months back and we always paid in cash. Of course she's not coming out and we found a way of paying her because she doesn't have a bank account. I'm concerned about how she's doing in this time as well, I'd be concerned that she probably isn't getting any of these allowances or anything like that and how is she doing? She's not young.



© Janet | 2020 | Re: Balance

I gave this photo the title - wake up and smell the flowers. I think for all of us, this whole thing is a little bit of a stop, pause, rethink, re-evaluate, just literally wake up and smell the flowers. We don't know how lucky we are. Most of us have a little bit of space and we're in very fortunate positions. We're working, we're getting paid. You think of people who are in horrible situations, those in direct provision and others who are in tiny little apartments, where money is not coming in because they can't go out to work. Those with children who may have difficulties that need a lot of attention and I just think this experience will be a reset for everybody. I think things will be more simple at the end of it all.

We are so lucky and maybe we should take a little time out to do the simpler things in life again. I think we've all moved on from that and are all so busy, but actually if you just take the time out to do the things that are simple and fun and cheap... that's the other thing, nobody's spending any money because you can't go anywhere, but a lovely walk in your local park is free. Even though you can only go two kilometres away, there are beautiful places you can be within your two-kilometre zone.



© Raquel | 2020 | Re: Balance

It was 50 years of World Earth Day, celebrating climate change this year. So I posted this picture on Instagram to remember how nature is important to us and how we should preserve it and try to do our best not to endanger the world we live in.

I think now with the lockdown, we are understanding that we are the species that endanger our world and we need to do better work if we want our planet to survive.



© Gabriel | 2020 | Re: Balance

In this new type of working environment, working from home, I'm going for walks in the morning, which I would never do in Central Park. Even at lunch break, I just work through. I noticed this cherry blossom and I was looking at it and thinking yes, less gas is being used throughout the world and we've seen on TV how air pollution is down and I was kind of wondering how that cherry blossom feels this year? It's right next to the Naas Road, so normally I'm sure it has to compete for all its nutrients against the carbon monoxide being given off by the cars. And this year, it's getting a fresh lease of life and I could even see with the sky light coming through there that the atmosphere is obviously benefitting from this lockdown and it's the one thing that for the greater world, there has been a positive effect. Though I don't think it was Greta Thunberg's idea that this would be the way we'd achieve it



© Sheila | 2020 | Re: Balance

This is the house next door to me and you'll see there's five cars there. There's four adult kids, and they each have a car, and the parent's car. I don't think any car has moved regularly in the past few weeks. Normally if I'm working at home, I'll go for a walk with the dog and there's never any cars in that spot, but now there's five cars there all the time. I kind of like that because I just hate the environment being damaged with emissions and I suppose the hardest part of my day is the odd time I do drive to Central Park, I hate that whole scene of bumper to bumper cars, lane after lane after lane. I think it's unsustainable in the long term, both mentally and environmentally. So the fact that cars aren't on the road to me is a big plus and I do think there is some research into saying the environment is doing a bit better, as a result of everybody staying put. So to me, that's a positive of the fact that there aren't as many cars on the road. When I see the five cars there all the time, it makes me think what are the knock-on effects of this confinement? Hopefully it'll have a positive effect on the environment. I hear the birds an awful lot clearer now and I don't know if that's because there are no cars, there's no noise... It just seems different this spring.

Acknowledgments

I would like to firstly thank the seventeen men and women who participated in this project for sharing their experiences with such openness, honesty and vulnerability. This project is fundamentally their work and would not have been possible without their generosity of time and spirit. It is a pleasure to work alongside of them on this project.

I would secondly like to thank AIB Technology, and particularly Jean O'Donnell, Wendy Beasley and Tim Hynes for their vision once again in understanding how the photovoice methodology could be used to both help give voice to the experience of employee within AIB, and to provide a platform for all voices to be heard at this time of change, upheaval and potential rebalancing.

Photovoice is a method that demands transparency and openness from participants with the aim of revealing truths. It takes an organisation that really wants to understand a topic to trust their employees with such a method. AIB is an example of such a company, unafraid of hearing what its employees have to say.

About the Researcher

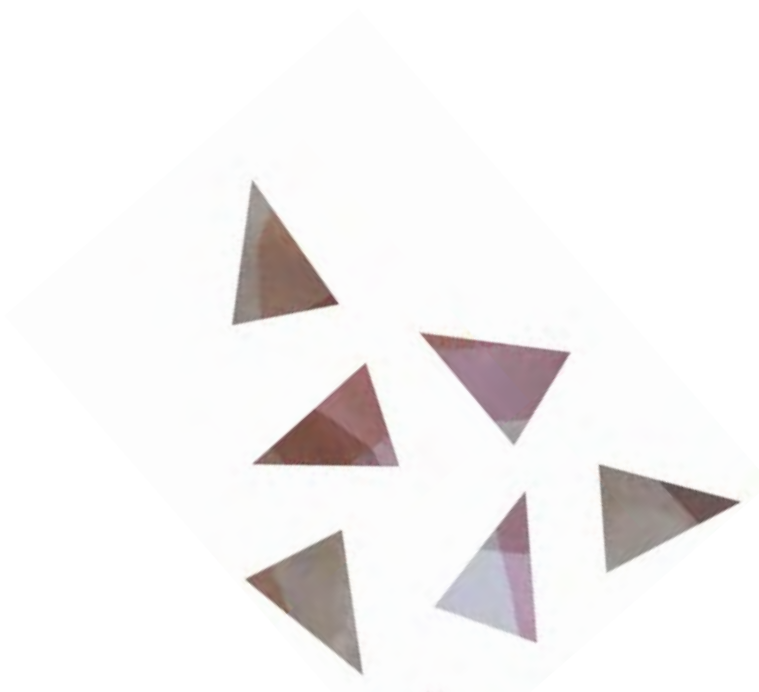
Dr. Maria Quinlan is a sociologist who specialises in the use of creative, person-centred research methods which aim to facilitate people in sharing their lived experience. She has pioneered the use of photovoice in Ireland, conducting projects across a broad range of topics – from people's experience of homelessness, addiction and mental health to people's experience of their working lives, particular in relation to issues of culture, wellbeing, and inclusion.

Maria is the founder of the Pink Flower Research, a research consultancy which focuses on using innovative methods to create actionable social insight related to equality and inclusion.

She is a former Human Capital consultant at Deloitte has lectured in Organisational Behaviour and Talent Management at University College Dublin (UCD), and Queens University Belfast (QUB). Maria is a collaborating research fellow at UCD, where she was formerly research lead at the centre for Applied Research in Connected Health. She is also Head of Research at the Institute of Integrative Counselling and Psychotherapy, where she lectures in Advanced Research Methods, the Sociology of Equality & Mental Health.

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