



# Preparing mentally for lift of COVID-19 restrictions

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As we enter a new phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, one might expect to feel a sense of relief. But more change also raises more questions. Under a shelter-in-place order, the expectations were clear, albeit unpleasant. As we start to dip our collective toe in the water, this can cause a new wave of feelings. Is it safe? Can I do it? Should I do it? There are countless “what ifs” to consider.

As humans we like to think of things linearly—with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Life seems to make more sense that way. As we have seen, however, that view does not apply to the pandemic. Instead, we are talking about curves—where we are on the curve, what the curve looks like, how we change the shape, etc. We also have discussions of a second wave. If a second wave, or peak in the curve occurs, it is apt to be smaller than the first, but nonetheless it’s challenging to think about. Just when we think we are out of the woods, more trees appear.

## Moving forward

Managing an everchanging situation requires some mental skill. If we anticipate and expect some waves, they are easier to navigate. Keep the following in mind when it comes to how you navigate forward:

- **To state the obvious, protect yourself.** Despite things being allowed that were not previously, we can protect our wellbeing the same way we always have. The decision regarding whether an activity is safe or unsafe is ultimately still a personal decision to make. The adage of “just because you can, doesn’t mean you should” seems to fit here.
- **Take a long view.** We are all better served by making decisions that fit within our overall worldview and sense of self. In times of disruption, tapping into our core values is a great way to stay centered. Being centered on values vs. fears tends to lead to more appropriate decision-making.
- **Stay informed.** Staying informed is important, especially when things change rapidly. Information has the power to allow you to feel secure in making decisions.
- **Accept things outside of your control.** These days, many things are outside of our control or sphere of influence. Having the ability to accept this prevents a needless internal battle. Trying to control the uncontrollable is, after all, impossible. This does not mean we cannot be intentional or have plans. On the contrary, planning is very important. While things may not go fully according to plan, we should strive to focus on what we can control and remain flexible to roll with changes that are inevitably going to occur.
- **Listen to your gut.** Think about this advice like driving a racecar: “If you think you’re going too fast, you probably are.” The same principle applies to COVID-19. If something seems like a bad idea, it might be, even if it seems to be true logically. If you’re not trusting your gut, run it by a trusted friend and get their input.

As we enter a new phase of the pandemic, we need not be victim to the uncertainty. The uncertainty may be challenging, but through it all we will learn and grow.

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