

The New Normal: We Ain't Going Back Now

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Whoa, last week was the strangest week I have experienced. Ever.

How are you holding up? Perhaps stop for a minute, and check in with yourself: How AM I actually holding up? You probably haven't had a chance to catch your breath from the horror of last week, and the ongoingness of the weekend. And, well, today, has unfolded with the biggest stock market drop ever, and a Bay Area "Shelter-in-Place" Order.

In the last week, you probably went to the store(s) and stocked up; you probably have your (tiny) workspace set up in your home; your kids are now out of school and you're getting them set up in their (really tiny) workspaces; and I am hearing from some of you, you're already starting to feeling isolated (and it's only been a week!)

You are not alone, for sure. The collective "we are all in this together" feeling might help ease some of the anxiety. That's the good news. The not so good news — what I am also hearing and sensing — is that many work colleagues and clients believe this is a three-week thing; we can tolerate this for three weeks, can't we? My guess is this is more likely a three-month thing, which would look like: kids out of the school the rest of the semester, which means they go back in Sept; WFH will be extended as mandatory by most, if not all, businesses or local government til the end of May; and we continue to be plagued with: when is this going to end?

What if it doesn't end, per se? What if we reframe the situation we are now all facing to create routines that will help us get through this transition period that will also help us on the other side? I think it behooves us to seek opportunity and to prepare for the New Normal.

What is that new stuff? Things you can start now, that you will be doing more of in the New Normal. The transition might be three weeks, but the New Normal is here to stay.

Here are some ideas:

Birdwatch, mostly alone. The [Bay Area "Shelter-in-Place" Order](#), under the special cases questions section, actually encourages people to get outside — take a walk or run, go to a park — to avoid being cooped up which may amplify your anxiety. It's good for well being, the notes say, with the very important caveat to practice social distancing — **stay 6 feet away from others**. And, by the way, don't forget to watch and listen for the birds.

Exercise at home. You have created your workspace already; please add a (tiny) place to exercise, and to get in some resistance work. Have Amazon send you two 15 or 20 pound weights, along with some resistance bands. Even 10-15 minutes a day of resistance will help. Remember, you're moving a lot less than normal. And creating specific time for exercise is important for burning calories and lowering stress.

Meditate. I have talked about the importance of meditation in my last two posts [here](#) and [here](#). Being mindful of your anxiety and stress level is key to getting through this transition period and in the New Normal.



Set boundaries. For those of us who have been doing WFH for years, the single most important practice is setting boundaries — for when you work and when you don't, and for how much you and your other family members are on technology. I suggest setting guidelines or rules together and sticking to them as a family.

Socialize. Isolation is already setting in. Consider scheduling a video conference or FT call with a different friend every day (i.e., it's Tuesday, so I get to chat with my friend Elizabeth today). Start a group video conference chat with several buddies. I am starting a Zoom poker and Scotch group with my friends. Who's in?

About the Author

Susan J. Bethanis, Ed.D., is the Founder/CEO of Mariposa Leadership, Inc., a 12-person San Francisco-based firm that provides executive coaching to tech leaders. Mariposa's recent clients include AppFolio, AWS, Gilead, OpenX, PayPal, Twitch, Theravance, Zuora, and Zynga. Sue's book, *Leadership Chronicles of a Corporate Sage*, is a fly-on-the-wall account of real conversations between a coach and an executive. Sue received her Doctorate in Education at the University of San Francisco, specializing in Organizational Leadership, and her Master's Degree in Education from Stanford, specializing in Instructional Design. Contact her at 415-265-3142, sueb@mariposaleadership.com. Follow her at [@suebethanis](https://twitter.com/suebethanis).

