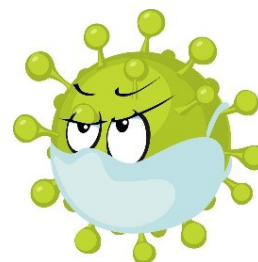


Pressure and Covid-19



Our Covid-19 lockdown has lifted fast and most people are still trying to figure out what is safe to do and what they are comfortable doing. Going shopping, having a party, not wearing a mask in public – these are things we’ve never had to think too hard about before, but that has changed in recent months. You might be vulnerable, or live with someone who is; you might be nervous about the *new normal*. It might be difficult to balance these issues with the activities you would normally do over the summer holidays. For example, a friend might invite you round for a BBQ - a seemingly harmless activity – but they might not realise you have a vulnerable family member, and you might not be sure how to respond.

You might not be sure how you feel about all of this. That is perfectly fine. It is also okay to change your mind. You might commit to meeting friends and then decide you’d rather not.

These pressures can be challenging to respond to at the best of times but in such a fast-changing climate, when we don’t fully know what risks to take, how we feel, or how our values fit with others, it can become even more stressful. Sometimes our friends aren’t forcing us to do things but we might feel an internal pressure to join in even if we don’t want to. Try and surround yourself with people who will accept your decisions and are willing to discuss them with you. If a friend suggests something you aren’t comfortable with, suggest an alternative activity. Talk to your friends about how you might manage any risks and if someone tells you that they are worried, take into account their fears and don’t force them into anything they don’t want to do.

Activity

1. Think about the last few months, considering the points below:
 - a. Have you stuck to the guidelines? If so, why? If not, why not? (Note: don’t attach any judgement to your actions, simply think about what you can learn about yourself)
 - b. What are your priorities based on the answer above? Perhaps you have prioritised contact with friends, spending time outside, or exercise. You might have stayed inside and only gone out when necessary. You might have chosen to focus on your mental health or the physical health of yourself and others. You might have followed the guidelines carefully, a little bit, or not at all.
2. Think about how you would like the summer holidays to look, based on the values you have identified above. Will you be spending time at friends’ houses or would you prefer to meet outside or even stick to video chats?
3. Write down some activities you would normally do over the summer. Think about how you might feel in the moment if someone were to suggest these activities (it is okay if your reaction is a positive one!). If you think of any activities you would normally enjoy but are now unsure of, plan what you might say.

