

CURTIS BANKS X SEA CHANGE SPORT

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Self-Isolation: An Endurance Event

As we approach the end of this second phase of self-isolation, the novelty of the situation has, for most, begun to wear off. There's a lot of noise about needing to exercise once a day, taking up a new hobby, starting to write that novel you've always secretly harboured. These suggestions are well-meaning but, in the vast quantities they appear on social media, can sometimes merely add to our existing sense of anxiety. The reality is that most of us will be alternating between feeling excited at the arrival of spring and wanting to hide in a cupboard.

Whilst time in the cupboard may serve as good preparation for life in an ocean rowing boat cabin, overall self-isolation has become something we now have to endure – and endurance is something I know a bit about. Whether it's convincing yourself to keep putting one foot in front of the other at high altitude as your lungs gasp at the thin air, or it's finding the enthusiasm to get dressed every morning rather than pretend your camera doesn't work for what feels like video call 462, the skills needed to get through are the same. Here are a few things sport and adventure have taught me and which I hope will assist you.

1. CONTROL THE CONTROLLABLES

External factors in adventure sport change continually and can be relentless and challenging. Whilst they can dramatically affect your endeavour, they ultimately cannot be controlled. To seek to do so is to waste time and energy that can be better spent elsewhere. Yes, it's important to look at what is happening in the world, but recognise that you're doing so to assess the situation. You must then consciously focus your attention on what in that situation you can control. Whether that's how often you watch the news, your routine, who you speak to outside of your household, your compliance with government advice; it is these things that will be the vital components of your survival arsenal. If you're not sure where to get started, make a list of all the elements that factor into your endeavour and then split that list into things you can control and things you cannot. Invest your energy in the former.

2. ROUTINE

In his now famous commencement address to the graduates of The University of Texas in 2014, Admiral William H. McRaven stated that *'If you want to change the world, start by making your bed'*. The message he was putting across is that you should *'start each day with a task completed'*. Even though our normal routine has been turned on its head we can carve out a new one. Wake up, stretch, shower, get dressed as if you're going out, make a coffee, prepare your workplace for the day, write a to do list. Having certain tasks that we repeat, especially if they provide a sense of accomplishment, will assist us in creating structure and continuity during this time.

3. MOVEMENT

Not everyone will want to be bunny hopping into the day with Joe Wicks five times a week, but some form of movement is certainly key to staying on top of your physical and mental health. It can be hard to find the motivation as the days whirl by, but movement actually creates energy. The reward for getting started is the ability to finish, with a wonderful hit of endorphins thrown in as a reward. Where it's possible/safe to do so, it's great to undertake that movement outside. Whether it's running or a nice stroll, or a high energy play session with the children to burn some energy off, the vitamin D hit will be a mood booster, as will the change in scenery.

4. FOCUS

Think about the next week, not the next few months. Trying to tackle the enormity of any large endeavour in one go will almost certainly lead to overwhelm. Anything beyond May is an unknown and, therefore, in keeping with the above, outside your control. Projections and lengthy discussions about what might happen only add to feelings of uncertainty. Stay present. It may not seem like a great deal is happening, but all sorts will have taken place in this period when you look back on it in aggregate. The pandemic has been likened to our generation's war experience, meaning that, in times to come, your grandchildren will want to know all about the mighty disappointment that was the year 2020. Why not keep a diary? Doing so will allow you to organise your thoughts, which is not only highly beneficial for mental health but will serve as a reminder of how far you've already come.

5. CONTACT

Whether you're solo rowing an ocean, or stuck at home in isolation, you can keep in touch with the outside world. That's not to say, however, that you should speak with everyone. Focus on the people that bring you up and make you feel good. Once you've delineated who they are, arrange a FaceTime rather than a call. By now we've probably all completed a multitude of quiz nights and will return to the office armed with more useless information than one could ever require. Instead, why not arrange to have dinner with someone via Skype? See this as a chance to reach out to those friends and family members that you don't always get around to speaking to when life is busier or take the time to really get to know the people that you live with. Vivally, be honest with those closest to you if you're having a bad time. Whether you're cursing those wishes for more time with your offspring, in need of a pep talk or worried you're not looking after yourself as well as you should be, those you care about are in the same boat and will understand and want to help. Don't be afraid to speak up.

6. TRUST

Trust that no matter how grave the situation may feel, people are doing everything they can to contain the issue and return us to normality as soon as possible. As with all journeys or undertakings, the first quarter is exciting, but the second quarter can be incredibly tough. This is the hardest section. You're slogging away but the end still seems so distant. In these moments, it is easy to feel like the current status quo will be forever, but it is – like all things – temporary. It's crucial to remember that the situation will improve. Think about what you're looking forward to when it does. Whether it's a friend's rearranged wedding, a postponed holiday, or seeing your family, it's painful to be denied these things for now but the reward is that they will be all the sweeter when they do happen – which they will.

To summarise, it's ok to have days where things feel off. After all, we are not working from home, we are at home trying to work during a global crisis. There will undoubtedly be times where you are required to weather the storm but keep your focus on the fact that you've brought your raincoat and the sun will come out again.

I'll leave you with these wise words from Admiral William H. McRaven:

'Know that life is not fair and that you will fail often. But if take you take some risks, step up when the times are toughest, face down the bullies, lift up the downtrodden and never, ever give up – if you do these things, then the next generation and the generations that follow will live in a world far better than the one we have today.'

Best,
Victoria