



Personal Outcomes Stories during COVID: Learning from practice

John Paul Fitzpatrick, Director, Teachmindset

How have you been able to keep a focus on what matters to people during COVID?



My main job is to support teachers; headteachers, parents and pupils across Scotland. Their lives were rapidly thrown into chaos at the start of the pandemic. For some their confusion, anxiety and stress were palpable. This sudden and rapid change made the response; the human requirement that was needed from me; very clear given my coaching expertise. All I could do was find a way to help and support teams and individuals with their emotions and see a way forward.

It's been tough for the young people I have worked with. Many have been talking about their anxiety; the challenge of not seeing friends; being lonely and their fears about their futures. I worked with them on their resilience and wellbeing and helped them maintain routines and focus. Many will experience anxiety long after the virus leaves us.

I guess I was lucky, in a way, in that I was able to lean in, connect and be of service. I found that a useful distraction from my own anxiety and worries about my own business. Instinctively, like the teachers I was trying to serve I just wanted to be of help so kept a sharp laser focus on emotional support and the resilience and wellbeing of everyone I worked with.

What have you had to do differently and what made this possible?

Like so many businesses I had to shift to online meetings, coaching and training and facilitation. Thankfully having worked at Strathclyde University previously, I am comfortable with online learning and teaching.

It's been much harder to adapt and change my work with pupils online due to the huge number of systems used across the country. In addition there is the fact that not all pupils have access to tech - or are choosing to use it if they do.

One thing that I find interesting is that I have found it relatively easy to form meaningful connection and trusting relationships online with people on a face to face communication over zoom etc - when the technology works!

Many of the people I have been coaching have experienced grief which has been heartbreaking at times; but hopefully, they have derived benefit from our coaching time together.

What have you noticed that has been better?

Things feel slower - that is better. I see in some cases teachers reporting better relationships with parents as they realise the inherent challenges in home learning and that everyone is going through a simultaneous struggle.

I am optimistic that schools will have the potential to truly become places of wellbeing and resilience for our children and young people and that this will have equal priority as educational attainment. For me, nothing matters more than all of our wellbeing and resilience.

How did this make you feel?

I am left with a wide range of emotions. I have been coaching a lot of people, many of whom have experienced trauma. It's been exhilarating; saddening; depressing; frightening - sometimes all in one day; sometimes at the same time. It has been a rollercoaster of emotions, and that continues - particularly as my elderly mother is shielded in Ardrossan and I remain concerned about her.

What have you learned through this?



I have learned to appreciate the quiet and recognise my own emotional state. I am more in tune with my feelings and those of everyone around. I have also come to re-evaluate fundamentally what is essential in terms of relationships and friendships. This crisis has consolidated my personal belief that our rampant consumerism and approaches to the environment need to alter as well as making time for one another.