



My Lockdown Covid-19 Challenge 8 Mixed Feelings –Life’s impact



Well here I am again folks; it's been a very challenging time of late with many mixed feelings. Life has a way of throwing stuff into the cooking pot to mix things up and it can sometimes be a little overwhelming but just like a storm these things pass and we move on and as always I really try to be positive.

We have had several cases of Covid in the family in these challenging times but when it hits the youngsters it really hits home. All are now recovering well, thank heavens. My husband continues to suffer the effects of long (and it does seem very long) Covid. It's times like these that put a little extra pressure on those of us who are suffering long term pain conditions and I can say that has certainly impacted on me these last few weeks.

I have had a couple of falls which have led to flare ups and injuries which has meant I have had to really use my arsenal of skills learnt both from the pain service and in life generally. Being part of the excellent team of 'Experts by Experience' has helped as we tend to support each other brilliantly. I do admit that as with anything sometimes it's hard to take your own advice and step back and care for yourself but if we don't we are of no use to anyone so I have had to take things easy and take a few rest days (and yes it can be frustrating to do so) to allow myself to regroup and recover from the flares, so you see I really do understand what it's like. I did a couple of puzzles which my daughter's neighbour gave me for which I am very grateful and will continue to pass on to others to do.

Little things mean a lot and my greatest joy today has been going out to the garden and harvesting my very first home grown sweetcorn, the sheer pleasure and joy knowing I have grown that from a tiny seed is amazing. I am currently overrun by cucumbers, 6 just picked and another 4 in the fridge, each year I think I will plant less but I can't resist, and this year I have only grown two varieties. My tomatoes are also great and the runner beans (my favourite) just keep giving. I always like to try growing something different so this year have grown a couple of radicchio plants they are quite easy to grow and pretty, the taste however is something unusual and if you like bitter things are ok, I cooked mine in the oven drizzled with honey and finished off with some balsamic vinegar and pine nuts, the feeling was we would have it again ...sometime so may give them a miss next year. We have had rhubarb crumble galore and I have made 2lb of rhubarb jam so far. Oh I've also made strawberry jam and again for the 1st time had enough gooseberries to eat and make jam for one of my daughters. The second batch of lettuce and spicy leaves are in and will be ready soon. I have harvested 2 lots of potatoes grown in bags and have another 2 nearly ready. The red peppers are just starting to colour so they will be the next to crop, whilst the chilli peppers could really do with some of the elusive sun as is the chard. But we will be eating a colourful crop for quite a while yet. It's so satisfying and gives me so much hope when I am having a bad day to see all of this nature's bounty outside my back door. Oh nearly forgot also made carrot top pesto (who knew you could eat carrot tops? it was great with pasta).



I have continued to use 'Movement as Medicine' even if it is somewhat reduced from usual, but every little counts. The Pain Management Service live feed Facebook sessions are about to come to an end as we come out of the strict Covid restrictions but all of the sessions are going to be available on the Facebook page for us to use as we wish. I would personally like to thank the team for providing the live sessions throughout these challenging times, it's been helpful, informative, fun, challenging to the right level and something to look forward to each week. So if you feel you would like to do a little more exercise this will be a great resource to keep going back to because it's really true that movement can be medicine! Let's keep those joints oiled folks.

With the ease of restrictions I have found things sometimes overwhelming knowing what to do for the best but have now settled and will start to go out more but will still wear a mask in enclosed places like shops etc., will continue to keep my personal space and keep my routine of cleaning and wiping down shopping – after all we have certainly had less colds and other bugs this last 18 months so it's worked (and I certainly wouldn't want Covid again) It's now just all become routine so why change. And yes I have struggled with those people who now seem to think Covid is all over and can go back to coming up right behind you when you are in the supermarket and are not wearing masks or just invade my personal space when I am out but I suppose it's the individual's choice however I will ask for space and not think I'm being rude in requesting it. We all matter after all!

I have to give a proud grandparent alert here as I am so so proud of my grandchildren. One just got fantastic results on year 1 Uni exams, one has just got amazing GCSE results, one started an apprenticeship, one is moving up to secondary school and been to summer school and the youngest is loving school. All of this amazing work done during these testing Covid times. I am sure I have grown two inches with pride and love this year!

The nature in the garden has been great; I've had another visit from the sparrow hawk although thankfully he didn't kill anything this time. The robins and their babies have been a delight to watch as they have grown and the sparrows have had another lot of babies, I think because the weather has been so strange. I have also for the first time had a couple of Jays visit, they are so beautiful (I've not yet managed to get any photos of them though but will keep trying, they are so quick. The bumble bees have been massive and abundant, so lovely to see and hear, I find just sitting and listening to them really helps with meditation.

I was so pleased to go out yesterday and see that despite the weather my first dwarf sunflower was in bloom, it really cheered me up and I am sure the birds will have a lovely feast off of the seeds later in the season, my normal ones are only just beginning to show any signs of a flower forming due to the weather but I am sure it will be worth the wait. There have also been loads of butterflies (the white cabbage ones laid and therefore no kale this year –oh well they enjoyed it obviously)



We continue to do slug watch every evening at 10 and after we have done that if the weather is good and the sky clear we have been watching for satellites and star gazing and by pure luck we have been so lucky to see several large meteors and some smaller ones which are apparently part of the Perseids meteor shower visible from 16 July to 23 August 2021.

It's such a relaxing way to end the day. I have just checked and apparently there are two more to be seen in October. So if you are awake and need to chill before bed it's certainly worth going out into the fresh air and looking up at the sky, I think we all forget to do these things from time to time and it is wondrous. I will never forget seeing the first big meteor a couple of weeks ago, so quick and bright and if it hadn't been for those pesky slugs I would never have made the effort to just go out and look up (see there's always a positive to everything 😊).



Finally I would like to thank Dr Matt Wardley, Counselling Psychologist who I have had the great honour to work with within the Pain Management Service on various projects as a volunteer Expert by Experience. Matt worked tirelessly with the team of volunteers to bring together the PainPals Helpline and ensure we are all well trained and gave us great support, all this on top of his clinical work. I wish him well in his new role, he will be greatly missed here in Dorset. Good luck Matt!



Keep smiling everyone and keep up the good work in your pain management journey and remember you are not alone the PainPals Helpline (01202 858361) is open Monday to Friday 11:00 to 16:00 and Wednesdays 14:00 to 16:00 if you would like to speak with someone who truly understands what it is like to live with chronic pain.

