

CAN QUARANTINES BE PRODUCTIVE? WHAT TO DO DURING A CRISIS by Josh Linkner

Just before every flight departs, the safety announcement offers a specific instruction: “In the event of an emergency, please secure your own oxygen mask before helping others.”

We’ve heard it so many times that we tend to tune it out, but this advice can be helpful to us all during the COVID-19 crisis. We must first take care of ourselves if we want to optimize the way we care for others. We simply can’t be effective helping those around us if we’re sick, gasping for air, and in a panic. As the crisis unfolds, I keep asking myself, “What can I do right now in these turbulent times so that I’ll look back in 12 months and be proud of how I handled things? What should I do during this crisis?”

It occurred to me that one option is to wallow in fear, panic, and self-doubt. We can freeze like a deer in headlights, consuming a barrage of gut-wrenching reports from the front lines of the crisis. That’s a choice that many of us are unfortunately making, immobilized by anxiety.

Yet there is another option. We can use the unexpected break in the action as a time to get better and stronger. A time to tackle things we’ve put on the back burner. A time to work on ourselves and those longer-term projects than never seem to get started. With that in mind, here are six areas to focus on in these uncertain times:

1. **Learning.** The extra time can be filled with deepening expertise in your field or exploring other areas you’ve long been curious about.
2. **Creative expression.** Whether it’s playing music, beginning that novel you’ve always wanted to write, or trying out a new recipe in the kitchen, a little creative output can elevate your mood.
3. **Sharpen your skills.** Whether you focus on professional abilities, a hobby, or a passion-project, wouldn’t it be great to emerge from this storm with an improved skillset?
4. **Practice gratitude.** Yes, we are living through a historic moment of adversity. At the same time, we all have things to be thankful for. Shifting from a victim mindset to a grateful one will help you cope in these challenging times.
5. **Get fit.** While team sports and gym visits are off the table for now, there are hundreds of in-home exercises that can drive real results. You can also shift from comfort food to a nutritional upgrade. With so many things outside our control right now, it feels great to be the one making decisions, and this is a place where we can quickly shift into the driver’s seat.
6. **Recharge.** If we have to be hunkered down anyway, no point in being frustrated about it. Instead, we can use this time to recharge so that we’ll be rested and energized once the crisis has passed. The situation we’re currently in stinks, no question about it. I’m not making light of a devastating time in history. I’m simply saying – like the instructions on an airplane – that our best strategy may be to take care of ourselves and use the time as productively as possible so that we emerge stronger once normal life resumes.

Stay safe and healthy, and please... take care of yourself so you can take care of others.

Josh Linkner is the go-to expert on innovation. He has nearly three decades of research and practical innovation experience, ranging from product and marketing innovations, to creative processes and operations, to building a culture of innovation. He has had the opportunity to serve on 83 corporate boards, create over 8700 jobs, and invest in over 100 startups. Contact SPEAK! for more information.