

How to Create Your Covid-Positive Legacy: A Guide to Our 'Great Reset'

by Sandie Dennis



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“I can’t do this
no more! I can’t
sing no more
sad songs!”

If you’ve
seen the film,
or theatre
production of
‘Dreamgirls’,
you might
recognise
these words.



They’re shouted by the character Jimmy ‘Thunder’ Early (brilliantly played by Eddie Murphy), a funky performer who doesn’t want to carry on singing the same sombre ballad he’s right in the middle of singing... on stage, to a packed audience.

Instead, he starts all over again, launching into an upbeat, soulful tune that gets everybody shimmying in their seats!

I mention this because after an exhausting year of Covid, I think we can all identify with “I can’t sing no more sad songs!”

In fact, it’s a line I say to my husband when the heavy news bulletins start getting a bit too much! It makes us both laugh, and it helps me switch my focus to the brighter times that lie ahead.



The Importance of Covid Reflection

But as quickly as I want those brighter times to arrive, I also think it's important to look back over the challenging and extremely unusual events of the past year.

No matter who we are, everybody has felt the effects of Covid-19. At the very least, we have all been reminded of our mortal existence, and how we can never really be certain about where life will take us next.

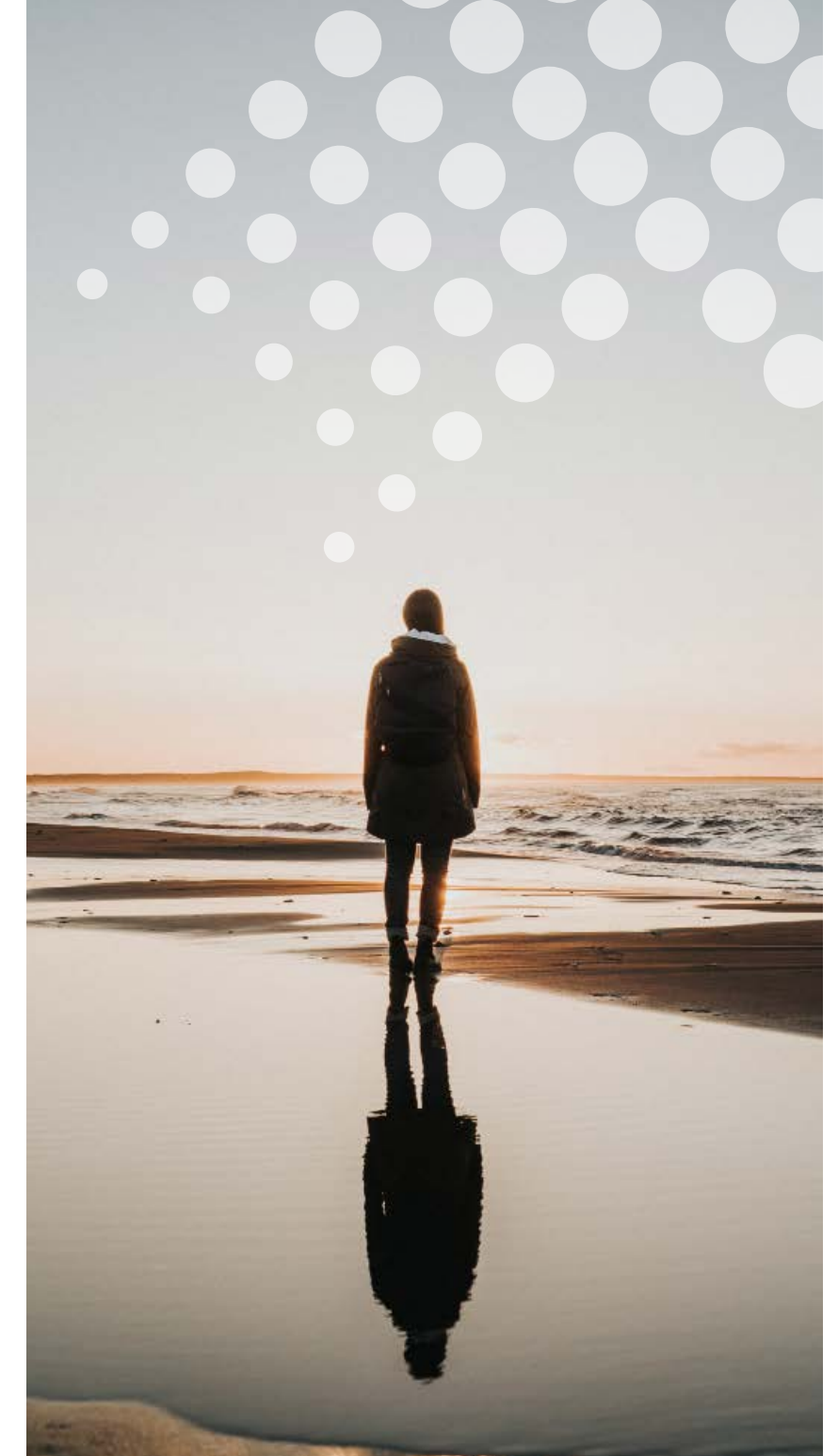
For me personally, work took a dramatic turn. Instead of face-to-face meetings, I found myself holding Zoom sessions, calls and writing a succession of support eBooks (eighteen in total, which you can find here – [link to books](#)).

These books were my personal response to the employee support discussions I was having about grief, loneliness, and heightened anxiety. These were mixed with uncharted practical subjects we weren't able to prepare ourselves for... including home schooling, managing the effects of Long Covid, and how to find work/life balance when your home suddenly becomes your workplace.

In amongst supporting a new wealth of employees with anxiety, depression, and PTSD, I have also been asked more spiritual-based questions than ever before, from people who were anxious to discover some existence of higher meaning, or a Grand Plan.

While I try to navigate questions like these, it's clear that the emotional impact of Covid is going to ripple through our lives for some time to come.

So, as the UK's vaccination programme starts to take effect, and as we slowly prepare to re-join our former ways of life, it's time for us to decide what our personal, positive Covid legacy is going to be.





What Are Your 'Covid Keepers'?

I've started to think about this moment in our time as something akin to a 'Great Reset'.

It feels almost as though, once we've received our vaccines, we'll stagger tentatively into our post-Covid world as though we're astronauts who have just touched down on a new planet.

(Particularly when the only 'Major Tom' I knew before 2020 was the one from David Bowie's 'Space Oddity'!)

But as we feel our way around this new planet, what exactly should we bring with us from the old one? Which 'Covid Keepers' are going to help us adjust and acclimatise to the change in atmosphere?

We will all have our own list of the 'Covid Keepers' that feel personally important. Here are some suggestions to include on yours.



Meaningful Communication

My employee discussions have confirmed the importance of connection and communication. Many people have felt a new, deeper appreciation of the quality time they've been spending with close family, sharing stories over home-cooked meals.

Some of us have also forged new links with our local communities. For example, I didn't know many of my neighbours before 2020.

Yet weeks of clapping on our doorsteps, and sharing our fears and jokes over garden fences, created a bond that led to a lively WhatsApp group, and regular chats with new friends!

Potential 'Covid Keepers' could include setting aside more quality time to spend with family and close friends, and perhaps starting a friendly conversation with a stranger when you see an opportunity (even a smile helps!)



Adding to Your Family

The influx of new parental coaching referrals is telling me that, for many people, their ‘Covid Keeper’ will be a baby.

Call it a result of all that ‘Netflix and Chilling’ we’ve been doing!

But realising that you need more love and joy in your life doesn’t have to mean adding a new person to it. Like many others, my family welcomed a new pet* into our lives – a gorgeous dog, in our case!

Whether human or canine, (or any other form of pet) warm connections activate the neurotransmitter oxytocin... or as I call it, the ‘cuddle’ chemical. This is known to have positive effects on our mood and sleep, as well as being lovely to experience!

(*The decision to welcome a pet mustn’t be taken lightly. It involves a healthy level of commitment, and you must also make sure you choose your pet from a reputable source.)



Making Better Use of Technology

We have harnessed technology in transformative ways over the past year.

A typical day in lockdown might have involved waking up to ‘P.E. with Joe’, before a Zoom call with the boss, planning online lessons for the kids, doing some virtual shopping, a few more Zoom calls, then settling down to enjoy a live-streamed concert or theatre show.

For many of us, living our lives online has also been a draining experience. My employee discussions revealed that the relentless procession of Zoom calls started out as a lifesaver, yet their artificial settings and intrusive nature gradually wore them down (see my eBook on ‘Zoom Doom’ for ways to combat this.)

But while we’ll happily shout “good riddance” to some of our forced online habits, there may also be some positives that have the potential to be ‘Covid Keepers’.

For example, one employee talked excitedly about an online knitting group she intends to continue with post-lockdown, made up of people from all over the country.

And for me, one ‘Covid Keeper’ will be online grocery shopping! I’ve learned so much more about the value of time, and I’ve decided I don’t want to spend mine in supermarkets.

I also plan to continue sending personal gifts from local suppliers, such as the farm-produced cheese platter I sent my sister for her birthday.

Not only did she enjoy it immensely – the platter kept her going for a whole week! – but the online buying experience, from a friendly local farm, felt much more rewarding than going to a large, faceless shop.



Managing Our Nutrition

The way we eat has altered; as restaurants began offering takeaway services, we enjoyed five-star meals (or greasy pizzas!) served to our own dining tables.

Meanwhile, some of us learned to cook fresh meals from scratch, or started a new passion for baking.

As we move back into our usual ways of life, suggested 'Covid Keepers' could include cooking at least one new recipe each week, or ordering a fresh food delivery box to replace all those takeaways (continuing with them only as an occasional treat!)



Pressing the Pause Button on Time

Since time has slowed down for many of us, we've become more mindful about how we choose to spend it.

Employees have talked about 'hybrid working', cutting down on the hours they used to spend on commuting, then sat behind a desk in their office.

Some have mentioned that they intend to live fully in the moment, or spend more of their time enjoying the Great Outdoors.

One of my own 'Covid Keepers' will be the 'Wellbeing Walks' I've incorporated into my working days. These have allowed me to gain a delightful appreciation of nature, revelling in the simplicity of birdsong, the smell of fresh-cut grass, and the colour of sunsets... so why would I give them up?



Positive Goal Setting

Setting positive, future-focused goals allow us to channel our energy and attention into achieving something worthwhile – whether we’re in the middle of a pandemic, or not!

My employee discussions revealed all kinds of goals people wanted to achieve, including planning creative projects, re-organising their garden or living space, or coming up with an exercise plan they can stick to.

During Covid, many of us learned how purposeful it can feel to create and work towards a clear goal, which can help to re-gain a sense of control over your life.

For me, that feeling is a definite ‘Covid Keeper’, particularly when there’s also that amazing dopamine hit to look forward to, when you’ve achieved what you set out to do!

Resilience for the Future

We may be down, but we’re not out.

Despite all the seismic changes we’ve had to make (and the untouched roots we’ve had to endure!) the world hasn’t ended.

Not only that, but many of us have discovered new ways to fix what wasn’t working, such as ditching an unfulfilling career. Many others established new coping mechanisms, resolved to help others more often, or simply developed a better internal response to ‘minor’ issues that would previously have left them feeling stressed.

Personally, I’ve learned that surviving a pandemic is of far more importance than a few straggly grey hairs!

Your personal ‘Covid Keepers’ could involve emerging into that new planet feeling stronger, or even with a fresh spark of creativity... like William Shakespeare, who wrote King Lear, Macbeth, and Antony and Cleopatra when theatres were forced to closed due to the bubonic plague.



Whatever your ‘Covid Keepers’ end up being, I hope you’ve gained some inspiration from these suggestions.

For my part, I hope I’ll be ditching that “sad songs” line very soon.

Ideally, I’ll be replacing it with ‘Celebration’ by Kool and the Gang, as I dance into the rest of our generation’s Roaring Twenties... which still have many years left to be enjoyed!

If you would like some additional guidance for your employees regarding the after-effects of Covid-19, please get in touch for a confidential discussion.



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