

STAY OR LEAVE DURING COVID-19? HOW TO MAKE & COPE WITH YOUR DECISION



Staff Care Consultant and Psychotherapist at Thrive BEN PORTER on making a significant decision.

One thing is clear. There's no one way or right way to make a decision about staying abroad or returning to your passport country (though your host and passport countries will have advice). In either scenario there will be feelings of loss and possibly guilt.

One of the unique challenges of this particular decision is that, because travel will most likely soon be halted in most areas of the world, you have to make a decision

today, with current information, that will impact the future, when circumstances may have changed. So maybe the situation in your host country is currently stable, your family is currently healthy, and your work is still viable in your location. If those situations change next week or next month and travel is not permitted, you are stuck with your previous decision. This can lead to playing out endless hypotheticals, worrying about all potential outcomes and making decisions within a worst-case-scenario mentality.

So what are some strategies you can employ to make your decision in a healthy way? And what can you do to thrive after the decision has been made?

Making the Decision

We know that fear and anxiety narrows our focus and that relaxation and compassion widens it. Understanding that we are in uncertain times and fear is normal, what can we do to move ourselves a little further towards creative and balanced thinking?

To maintain perspective about big decisions during this crisis, find ways to centre yourself (breathing, stretching, observing nature) and then externalize your thoughts and feelings (conversations, journaling). Avoid getting stuck in your head and ruminating, which leads to negative cyclical thinking. This is especially true for people who usually experience some anxiety or depression. Ask yourself:

- Do I have current and accurate information?
- Acknowledge that some things are in your control while others are out of your control. Consciously release what is out of your control.
- Have I talked with my loved ones about the decision?
- How might I feel about the decision in 5 years' time?
- Have I made a pros and cons list?

After the Decision

After making a decision, intentionally shift your thinking from far-sighted (objective analysis) to near-sighted (aligning with your decision) and explore the new opportunities created in this time.

In the coming weeks and months we may experience separation from partners, family and our normal friendship group. We may feel isolated. Have you felt isolated before? What has helped, and who are the people you can reach out to? What are some things that can look forward to? What will you find difficult and what do you need to lessen the impact of those things?

We've heard the advice from many sources: continue to exercise, eat healthy, stay in touch with friends online, limit media, establish and maintain routine, avoid substances. These are all very important. Yet it's safe to say that there's often a gap between what we know we should do, and what we actually do. So take some

time to think through what you need in order to keep it up when it comes to these healthy behaviours.

My humble contribution to advice around staying well is two-fold:

1. Acknowledge and accept the new reality. This is tricky, because we don't yet fully know the impact of coronavirus, so we can simply look a few steps ahead. Remember that human beings are exceptionally skilled at adaptation.
2. Practice compassion with yourself and others. You will have moments of feeling unsettled, or thoughts of having made a wrong decision about staying or going. That is normal. Be gentle with yourself. There will be good days and bad days ahead, and that's okay.

Here are a couple of other sites that address wellbeing during coronavirus: [Coronavirus and Wellbeing from Mind.org.uk](#), [Stress and Anxiety during Coronavirus from CDC](#).

Date

Mon, 23 Mar 2020

Author

Ben Porter

Blog category

Blog Covid-19