

CHAPTER-14

MY LEARNING AND LIFE EXPERIENCES OF “NEW NORMAL” DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



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ABSTRACT

Narrated my own short life experiences during this COVID-19 lockdown time from March-Sept 2020. I'm a working Assistant Professor at Government Pharmacy College, Rumtek Sajong located at far flown of North East Indian state-Sikkim, having geographical areas-7,096 Sq.km with population of 6.1 Lakhs according to Census 2011. Here I have highlighted the situation, things and time spent by me during this lockdown. Shared the things I have learned and skilled my abilities in this pandemic situation. For me, COVID-19 situation was "Opportunity" not "Problem".

INTRODUCTION:

We have heard and read enough about how tough life has been due to the COVID-19 situation in our lives since the beginning of the year 2020, but what positive things can we take from the pandemic situation and what has the lockdown taught As a working teacher, I find it most important for us to change our positivity mindset and change our ability in

this situation. I share my feelings in front of every listener here from my heart.

Dated 23rd March 2020, the official notification was released by the Government of Sikkim on the COVID-19. I was in the college; notification stated that there will be total lockdown in the state w.e.f 25th March 2020. As per the pandemic caused unprecedented havoc and emotional turmoil, it changed our lives like never before. I found myself struggling to balance my professional and personal commitments. We were about complete our probation period with Government of Sikkim since last year March 2019 only we were recruited in this post(Eight of us). This situation created devastating and panic situation in my life. I was working far from my home town (Legship Bazaar West Sikkim) and staying in the rented room at Sajong East Sikkim. I was preparing for so many expectations needed to fulfill in this up coming days. So I decided I wouldn't let all this affect my emotional and mental well-being and made some changes in lifestyle. I picked some lockdown-

personal growth and developmental, and friendly activities in doing so, which have now become my mantras for a good health, professional, personal and peaceful life. For me, the extended lockdown resulted in writing a research papers, attending national and international webinar on educational topics and for personal development, online classes for my students, watching TV, playing with neighbor kids, book reading, plantation in my small garden, cooking, meditation, Yoga, using internet as learning source, doing sleepless nights and additional responsibilities as a reviewer for UGC approved journal, as these became my “New Normal” during the lockdown. My “New Normal” activities of the lockdown time are summarized below:

Writing research papers:

From the day of lockdown, I have decided to write research papers of my previous post graduate work and some review papers of recent interest of research. As a teacher, we need it for our promotion in the job later on. Till the Sept 2020, I have published total four research and review papers and one book

chapter

(<https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=EzbXJnoAAAJ&hl=en>). Still five research and review papers are communicated to Scopus and UGC approved journals out of which one got accepted in Scopus journal.

Take delight in the simple things

From the beginning I used to be food lover, especially fish fry and curry. However I never cook nice food during such times compelled me to surf for the best fish recipes. The savories turned out well, and I learned something new too. After preparing and enjoying them with myself, I realized the importance of the simple pleasures of life. How to cherish or enjoy the simple things:

- Ditch the fancy, simple is the new black
- Spend quality time with loved ones
- Take pleasure in the things in and around you



Fig-1: Fish Recipe made by myself at rented room at Sajong

Practicing of plantation:

From my busy schedule, I took a time for the collection the flower sapling and vegetable seeds including some immune booster plants such as Tulsi, ginger, coriander, chilly, Tomato, etc.



Fig-2: Tomato and Chilly young Shoots in my small garden

Making health a main concern

Always needed improvement in our sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy eating habits. We adopted some fundamental changes, such as avoiding frozen snacks and reducing our intake of carbohydrates. A simple step forward and now my family have a much healthier lifestyle. You can also get your family involved in household chores such as mopping, washing clothes and cleaning utensils. Put on some of your favorite

songs while you are at it, and challenge your little ones for a dance-off. Have fun with family, while ensuring a workout and doing things as well. What you can do to stay fit when indoors:

- Laughing is the old medicine
- Pick easy exercises like skipping and on-the-spot jogging
- Doing daily morning and evening meditation
- Eat green vegetables for healthy life

Developed a habit of reading books:

As a teacher, I used to study the self help books in my free time. During this time I got lots of free time apart from my schedule time. So started reading new-old educational, developmental and motivational books for one hour in the morning and evening a day. With these five months, I was able to go through all these books that are given below. Still some are in my bucket list-Sapiens: A brief history of humankind by Y.N Harari, The art of public speaking by Dale Carnegie and J.Berg Esenwein, Inner

engineering: A Yogi's Guide to jy by Sad guru, How to talk to anyone by Leil Lowndes.

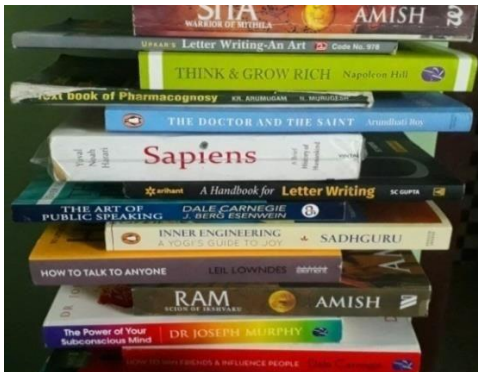


Fig-3: Books read during the lockdown and my bucket list

Be a miniaturist

Within a few days of the lockdown I realized how much space was occupying my non-essentials. This meant re-evaluating our procurements and being minimalist. To be a minimalist means only making the best choices about what is essential. The choices can be reflected in the food you eat, the clothes you wear, the transport you use, and so on. Ask yourself: "Is it useful? or "Do I really need it? If the answer or rationale is in favor, it will remain. How to become a minimalist.

- Be very clear about what you want
- Write down non-negotiable rules for yourself and abide by them
- Ignore things that you can avoid

Internet for learning

During the Covid-19 lockdown situation, I'm as a teacher has to take the online classes for our students and side by side attend my national and international seminar also. It's been a hectic schedule for me however I managed it as a pro-professional.

From the first day of April 2020, I have started the online classes for my students. I as a new learner faced lots of problems because it was my first experience of online teaching and happening for the first time in my entire life. Used the zoom app for the first time and app was very convenient and easy to use however with pro-version of app has the time limits. Still I have used for conducting my online class. Now I'm using two LMS, zoom and Google meet for my students convenient. Prepared at least 30 slides for previous classes and shared through slideshares.com.

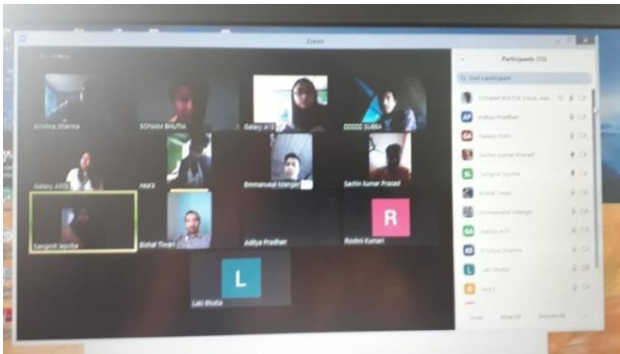


Fig-4: Conducting online zoom class for my B.Pharm 2nd year students

Webinars/Seminars:

I have gone through so many online certificate courses and FDPs offered or sponsored by the UGC, AICTE, HMRD, MHA, SWAYAM, AWSAR, ATAL training, ICMR, ARPIT, Govt. of India and other bodies like- WHO, OER, Elsevier, Publons, Courser, Bright talk, future learning, etc. Attended and participated in many Govt. and private educational institutionalize seminars related to COVID-19, educational reforms techniques, educational development, Drug discovery, Pharmacy, Research writing, Health issues, Economic issues, NEP 2020, etc. I have downloaded at least eleven educational applications such as WebEx meet, GoToWe, Google team, Zoom, Google meet, Telegram, Google classroom, Tec mint, etc in my laptop and cell phone to attend the different types of webinars during the lock down.

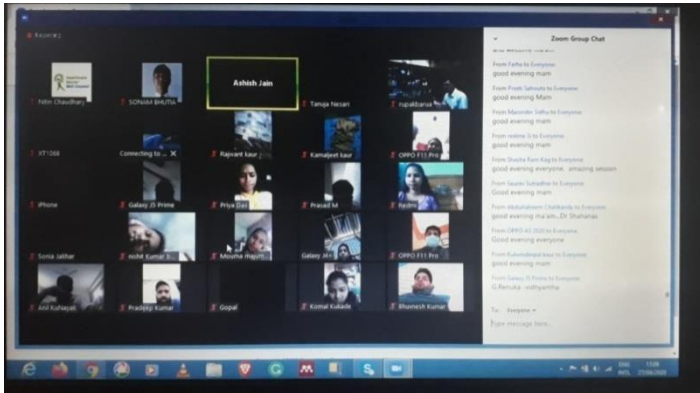


Fig-5: Attending one week Faculty Development Programme

Family always comes first

Prior to the actual lockdown, we had all struggled to strike a balance. Extra work hours, fatiguing commutes and additional responsibilities made us ignore the little things in life. Now that we have time, we should appreciate these moments, and make sure we don't go back to the normal before. Some important suggestions from what I did:

- Make your schedule with your partner and take turns to manage household chores
- Plan a time table that covers every major activity and follow it sincerely

- For some important meetings, make schedule in calendar and pick a distraction-free space to work comfortably
- Take periodic interval to interact with family members

Fun activities with the family:

- Watch movies or trending shows, whenever you get time
- You can even shoot some funny Tiktok or challenge videos with your family
- Spend quality time with family by playing indoor games

Practice the things that make you happy

Growing up with multiple responsibilities, on certain hobbies I missed out. I regained my love of cooking during the lockdown, as I experimented with different cuisines. Sunday has become the synonym for cooking time with my family and trying something else. I've also found a way in the virtual world to connect with like-minded folks. This worked wonders when it was beating the lockdown stress. It motivates me

further to try something even more exciting each day. I have picked up some invaluable life lessons in doing all these lockdown-friendly activities too:

- Explore your passion
- Be patient and enjoy the process
- Consistency is the key
- Prioritize your life to do what makes you happy

Cleaning of our college during lockdown

My college is located nearby, it's hardly 2 minutes walk down from where I'm staying. So on fine day, two teaching and almost ten supporting staffs those who were in rotation wise duty had decided to conduct a small cleanliness drive in our college. Glimpses of that day are given below:





Fig-5: Cleanliness drive in our college during Lockdown

Recognition

Selected as a reviewer for one of the esteemed Web of Science, Scopus, UGC care list indexed journal since Feb 2020. Till now, I have reviewed at least ten research papers and out of that seven got accepted also. With zero resources required, everyone can pick and implement such learning skills in their life. Cherish to a sound and safer future and a better you.