



Adjust the lens you look through

'I am so over this Covid-thing'. This is a phrase I am hearing more and more as the months go by and pandemic fatigue sets in. The fact is that no matter how we feel about the situation, the virus may not be over us.

It has been a long and arduous year, stretching our personal and professional resources to its limits. We know that the next few months are going to be tough. Still, a lifetime of working towards the last school day and the reward of a long December holiday, has conditioned us to think the same applies to the pandemic. Subconsciously we expect that come the end of the year, this nightmare will be all over.

But the truth is, we must face the fact that with Covid-19 it is not a case of returning to normal anytime soon. Yes the school year may end come 15 December but that doesn't mean we start with a clean slate next year and that the pandemic is over.

What is over, and what we have to get over, is what we used to consider to be the normal. There is no pre-Covid and post-Covid. There is only pre-Covid and living with Covid.

If we are going to regain or grow a joyful existence, we have to change the way we see our worlds. **Cognitive reframing**, is what it is called in psychology and means that we deliberately choose to see circumstances from a different perspective.

Think of a camera lens. The picture you see in the viewfinder changes depending on the lens you use. A wide-angle allows us to see more of the scene than a normal lens. A telephoto lens makes it easier to focus on a subject in the distance or to magnify something closer to you. A macro lens enables you to see minute details close-up.

As Stephen R. Covey says in his book, [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change](#), 'we must look at the lens through we see the world, as well as the world we see, and that the lens itself shapes how we interpret the world.'

SELF-CARE SKILLS FOR TEACHERS

The picture we have of the world depends on the lens we have selected. This picture determines our thoughts, opinions, behaviour and emotions.

When we change the lens, we change the way the picture is framed and the way we experience the world.

The same applies to our experience of the pandemic. Even just our choice of words about the pandemic, expresses the lens we have selected to view the world we live in. Compare 'I am so over Covid' to 'I am getting used to living with Covid' to 'I have made peace with life in the pandemic'. Three different viewpoints each framed by a different lens.

Which lens are you using? Is it:

- A lens that helps you deal better with life as it is?
- An outdated lens that distorts your picture to fit your longing for a bygone era?
- A magic lens that concocts a fantasy world from which Covid-19 has or will vanish?



How do I recognise the lens I use and whether to exchange it for another?

1. Start with making a commitment to yourself to be honest in this **self-assessment** exercise.
2. Put aside ample **time to reflect**.
3. Consider the lens you are using to **frame** your view of life with Covid-19. And just know that there are many more and nuanced lenses than the ones I mentioned earlier. Your lens is influenced by your personality, your culture, your unique circumstances and your history. No one lens is right or wrong. Some viewpoints are merely more effective in helping us deal with the situation and others not. Don't judge. Just observe and describe what you notice.
4. Closely observe your **thoughts** about life with Covid-19. Look at the **words** you use to describe this world.
5. Notice what you are **feeling** and how you express your emotions. Some people feel a deep sadness, some are impatient, other are irritated, some are 'just so over it', some show forbearance and a handful see this experience as an opportune time to make changes. What are your **dominant feelings**? Remember no matter how accepting one may be, emotions fluctuate all the time. So pay attention to your typical emotions.
6. Make a list of how your lens supports your **personal and professional well-being** or not. Take into account how it affects your physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, occupational, financial and environmental wellbeing.
7. Consider what aspects of your view of life with the pandemic you might have to **reframe** to shift your perspective and to better deal with the situation.

Next week we will look at ways to reframe the way we look at the Covid-19 world to better support our own wellbeing.

Keep well
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