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## The Pandemic Ruined My Social Skills

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# The Pandemic Ruined My Social Skills

By Ashley Turner  
UCF Forum columnist  
Wednesday, June 30, 2021

If it feels exhausting or stressful to socialize the way you did before lockdown, you're not alone.



(Photo by unsplash)

I don't know if you noticed, but we are back outside! The world is opening back up, and after over a year of being in the house, working from home, and attending Zoom celebrations and parties, I may not be the same person I used to be.

During the last few months I have gathered with friends and family and realized that . I was always a more introverted person, but my job, sorority, husband, and family have all encouraged and boosted my extroverted ways. Without being around most of those people for quite some time, I can honestly say I have turned into a hermit.

I enjoyed my alone time, random naps and binge-watching my favorite shows. I never had to really leave my house unless I was shopping for something, but even with that, there is Amazon and Instacart to get my groceries for the next two weeks. If I needed to get some physical activity in, I would go for a walk around the neighborhood or do a home workout on YouTube.

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Life was simple, and I liked that.

I discovered that living in a box can make your days feel slow, but months go by fast. What we thought was going to be a two-week lockdown turned into a year and a half of isolation.

Some people fully took advantage of the extra time at home, and others became depressed and unsure of the next steps in life. So how do we enter the world again and go back to “normal”?

As we all get comfortable getting back out there, you must learn to be patient with yourself. You may have some anxiety going back to work or attending a big gathering. Maybe you have put on a couple of pounds and didn't end up with the beach body you said you would strive towards during quarantine. That's OK!

We all went through a tough year of social injustice, politics, isolation and health scares. The global pandemic has affected us all, but we must try and get back to who we once were.

It may feel exhausting or stressful to socialize the way you did before lockdown, but embrace the awkwardness. Understand that it may take some time to get comfortable being in large groups, shaking hands or conversing. I recently noticed myself getting anxious before an outing or not holding eye contact with people that I have known for years. It may not seem like it, but it's perfectly normal experiencing these things as we get acclimated back to our regular lives.

Interacting on Zoom and social media may come easy, but we need human, face-to-face interaction. Start these social interactions with small groups of close friends or family. As some of us go back into the office, start small by grabbing coffee or taking a walk with one close coworker before you head straight to the office “welcome back” party. Be honest with your boss and yourself if you feel that you won't be able to attend a certain work function or event because of your concerns.

Some of us have been waiting for this moment. We've missed our friends and cannot wait to add to our social calendar. It is definitely an exciting time. People are reconnecting, traveling and heading back to the gym.

The year 2020 was unique and life-changing. I now have a new appreciation for life and time. Even though I wonder how my social skills will be as I go back into the office, I'm excited for a change of pace, scenery and possibly fewer Zoom meetings.

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