# AfHA Ep3 Coming Out Of Lockdown-New Ways

**Narelle:** So, hello and welcome to the Happtivist podcast for Action for Happiness Australia. We want to inspire action for a compassionate and connected society, and to do this we use and share the science of well-being, but in a way that you can connect with, understand and apply immediately. So, in this podcast we promote individual and collective action. We want to empower you with your wellbeing, provide ideas, make connexions, and inspire you. So, who are we? Hello, I'm Narelle Lemon. I'm the Chair for Action for Happiness Australia. I'm also an educator, coach and researcher and I'm passionate about self-care and translating this into the everyday.

**Linda:** Hello, I'm Linda, Secretary of Action for Happiness Australia. I'm also a facilitator, coach and trainer. I'm passionate about wellbeing at work and the restorative power of walking in nature. It's benefits to our body, brain and mind. In this episode, we'll be talking about coming out of lockdown, doing things in new ways. So, what is it?

**Linda:** Doing things in new ways involves trying out new activities, ways of thinking and developing new habits. It involves focussing on what you can change. Being curious, having a growth or learning mindset. And stretching your comfort zone to try something new. The Dalai Lama is quoted as saying, "Happiness is not something readymade. It comes from your own actions". So, the invitation here is to be intentional in your actions. Muster up your courage to try out something new or find a new way of doing something that's familiar to you. Lockdown, of course, has impacted us all differently. For some, it's provided time to reflect and maybe even start some new habits. If you have formed some healthy lockdown habits, great. Decide what you want to keep doing and why. For others, the pandemic may have meant that they're busier than ever, either at work or volunteering or adding to the family, either in human or pet form. So, I think what is true for most is that life has changed in some way. What do you think Narelle?

**Narelle:** Oh, I hear you Linda, so much. The pandemic has changed everything, and I would have said some things a little while ago, but we're reflecting on this. It really has changed absolutely everything, and I kind of think that's a good thing because it allows us to go, okay, I want to continue doing this. Yeah, this is not serving me so much anymore. Or I'd like to refresh and rejuvenate that. And so, I was just thinking about some of those things that have really changed for me, and there's new ways of doing things, so I feel more connected with my international friends. Now, previous to COVID, even though we wanted to catch up, it was like an effort to go, Oh, there's a 13 hour time delay difference. What does this mean? How do we get it to work? Who wants to go super early or late in the evening? And now it just happens, you know, multiple times a week. And there's a blur between personal and professional life in ways I've never seen before. And so, this is providing a really nice opportunity to reset boundaries and extend communication skills and how we talk about that and we talk about change as well. I've had the chance to work with people globally, virtually, that I would never have physically been able to do with and couldn't even fit that into a calendar year because I wouldn't have been able to fly to all these different locations.

**Narelle:** So that's kind of kind of cool to be able to click in and click out, you know, Canada one day, Indonesia the next day, sort of moving around like that. I've learnt to listen to my body more and particularly around sleep and moving through various different patterns of sleep that I think many of us have noticed during COVID. I've gone from being a super, super early morning bird up, up like no tomorrow to sleeping right through until 9 a.m. to going, Oh, hang on, that's not right. I need to just go back into, you know, a bit more healthier boundaries there in terms of sleep and listening to the body, giving it a rest. But also, how does that that work with everything else that's happening? I think new recipes, because cooking from home has happened a lot more so. And I'm not I'm a baker, but any other cooking I struggle with it is not my gift to. So, I'm pleased to have experimented with a whole heap of different other recipes and try out different things and savoured that opportunity to do that as well.

**Narelle:** Feeling more connected with work colleagues as we're clicking and click out of meetings and exploring cool projects together, I've kind of like not having to commute. That's been a that's been a nice thing. So, exploring new ways of working with that as lockdown shifts and what's happening there. I've sold a house and relocated to a more aligned suburb to how I want to live my life. So that's been an awesome change. I've watched nature rejuvenate, which has been just gorgeous, and particularly the return of black cockatoos to the Otway’s, which has been lovely to see over the last couple of years in lockdown. And of course, we've grieved friends and loved ones in new ways and that has been challenging but has also brought many of us, of us closer together. And then so Linda, these are just some of those some of those little ways that I've started to think about new opportunities that COVID has brought, you know, and I've shifted through resistance to appreciation of what comes with that way. And of course, we could add so many more and heaps of other people would add so many more as well.

**Linda:** I love that Narelle, and I love the looking for opportunities in that as well. And life has changed in so many ways, both daily little ways and also big ways as well. So, if life has changed for you over the last year or two, there may be some ways of doing things in the past that perhaps no longer serve you now. So, I actually read a quote from James Clear, who's the author of Atomic Habits earlier in the week that really resonated with me. So, his quote is "The strategies that made you successful in the past will at some point reach their limit. Don't let your previous choices set your future ceiling. The willingness to try new ideas always allows you to keep advancing". And I love that notion. I love the notion of keeping advancing. So, you know, from the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle to modern day positive psychology, researchers suggest that personal growth so feeling like we're developing our potential or being open to new experiences, might also include developing self-awareness, adapting and improving over time. Along with developing that sense of mastery, feeling that sense of competence are all important to our well-being.

**Narelle:** Yeah, so very much. I love that quote from James Clear. That is a really nice one. I think we need to print that out and put it on a t shirt really nice. And so, the changes to COVID restrictions and coming out of lockdown in Victoria, Linda and I are both based in Victoria, but New South Wales is moving through this as well a little bit I think about a week ahead of us at the moment. They're providing a great context for trying things in new ways and so wellbeing science has some great theories and practises that can help us do that.

**Linda:** Absolutely. So, let's look at one of them now. So, let's focus on our mindset. So, the way we think about and approach things, including what we believe about ourselves and our capabilities, which is all elements of our mindset, can really influence our willingness to try new things or to do existing things differently. So, Carol Dweck, who is a leading researcher, coined the terms "fixed mindset" and "growth mindset" to describe two different ways of approaching learning. A fixed mindset is when a person thinks they're qualities, so that might be their intelligence, or their talents or abilities are fixed, and they can't be changed. So, for instance, they might believe that they have a set level of intelligence and can't do anything to change it. So, a growth mindset is the opposite. A growth mindset is when a person believes that their talents, their intelligence and their abilities can change through taking deliberate action and applying energy and effort to it. So Dweck's research suggests that people have a predominantly fixed mindset and they might avoid challenges or situations where they might fail. They might tend to give up more easily when the going gets tough or there are obstacles or obstacles in the way. They can also shy away from trying new things, especially if they think they'll look foolish.

**Narelle:** Mm, great insights there. And it's reminding us that we can see ourselves as either good at something or not and seeing putting effort into task that's fruitless or not seeing the opportunity to grow. And it's a really interesting tension, isn't it, between can I embrace this now or hang on a moment? This is I'm pushing this away. I'm really resisting.

**Linda:** Absolutely. People who have a growth mindset see themselves as being able to learn and grow, being able to develop skills and accomplish their goals with time and effort. So, they tend to embrace challenges and persist even when they are faced with obstacles. So, they see putting in effort as the path to mastery.

**Narelle:** Mm. A great example of this is the basketballer, Michael Jordan, who's quoted as saying to his college basketball coach, "No one will ever work as hard as I work". So it's also reported that he worked hard to improve his game and often stayed on after schedule practise to keep practising himself long after his Team-Mates had headed home and having not been chosen for his high school varsity team, I imagine it could have been really easy to give up, so that would be a fixed mindset. Yet he did the opposite, which is a growth mindset. He saw an opportunity. So, a fixed mindset can be limiting, whereas a growth mindset can be freeing. Well, I really like that feel of fixed is limiting. I kind of thinking of like concrete feet. You're just like bogged down. You just it's heavy. You can't move with growth freeing. I don't know. There's movement, you can flow, you can try things. And I think a growth mindset is really beneficial at a time in life, and especially when we're called to do things differently. With restrictions easing and opportunities opening up for us all. This is a really nice time to think about growth mindset. So, Linda, tell us more about those benefits of the growth mindset.

**Linda:** Research suggests there are lots of benefits to the growth mindset. So, people who have a growth mindset have higher levels of motivation. They tend to experience lower stress or anxiety or depression, have better work relationships. They perform at a higher level, and they also have a reduced level of burnout as well. So, the good news is, is that whilst our mindset can be pervasive, it's unlikely that we have a fixed or growth mindset about everything. So, for example, you might have a growth mindset about learning a topic of interest. So, for me, I love learning about anything to do with people. So why we do what we do, our motivations, our habits and you know, even the neuroscience behind it. So, for me, I'm happy to step out of my comfort zone, be the one asking the questions that nobody wants to put their hand up for or challenging myself in new ways when it comes to learning. But I know I have a fixed mindset about my social skills. I often feel awkward in social situations, so both face to face as well as on social media. And it's easy for my mindset then to revert back to thinking, Oh, I'll just be never I'll never be good at small talk. So, whilst I have a growth mindset in relation to learning, I know that I tend to fall into a fixed mindset when it comes to being in social situations. And you know, interestingly I was at the local office supply store on the weekend and I noticed that they actually have books on making conversation at the counter right next to the air purifiers. So, you know, maybe it's not just me, but you need that growth mindset to be able to pick up the book, you know, and to learn and explore around the art of conversation.

**Narelle:** Yeah. Linda, something tells me you're not the only one who's having to learn how to be social again and embrace it as we all come out of lockdowns and shifts, actually, even how we engage with each other in real life. So, another way to think about it also is you could have one mindset about your creativity and another about being good with figures or money, for example. And so, it can it can apply to different things in different contexts. And sometimes it might not be seen as interlinking, but other times they might be. And the thing is to notice when you're having limited beliefs and the noticing is key, as that is when you can flip it, or what we call about maybe labelling it and then reconsidering the opposite or a different perspective. And that's where that growth set starts to come in. In terms of that openness to, oh, okay, I can see what's happening here. Maybe I can think about doing this or approaching this or thinking about this in a different way. So, James Anderson talks about the mindset continuum from having a fixed mindset to a low growth mist and high growth mindset. So as with many things, it's not always black and white either or, but the research shows that your mindset you have to any specific area will grow and guide you with your actions and probably the likelihood of what those outcomes will be as well. So how can we apply this?

**Linda:** Well, the great news is that you can change your mindset. Neuroscience tells us that our brains can continue to make new neural connexions all the way throughout our lives. So, every time we think or behave differently, our brains fire off a new neural pathway. And over time, if we keep repeating the way of thinking or behaviour, that pathway becomes stronger and we form a habit. So, there's Hebbs Law. So Hebbs Law says that "neurons that fire together, wire together". So therefore, it is possible to change your thoughts, your habits and behaviours and you can change your mindset and with some simple actions you can learn to apply a growth mindset to the things that you do.

**Narelle:** This may be especially helpful in our current environment. So, whilst lockdowns lifting is great news, it's normal to have a range of emotions and you might be nervous about socialising again or changing working circumstances. So, a growth mindset can be helpful here. So, let's go back to social situations. Each person will have a different level of confidence in social situations. Some will feel awkward, like Linda and hesitant, like myself, and others will be super, super confident. And they're the life of the party and they're booking everything and they're booking friends and they're out and about and off we go. So, I think COVID may exacerbate this. And people have been who have been previously, I suppose, uncomfortable in social situations may feel a little less so now, and that is totally fine. And people who may feel a little less confident having to navigate social distancing as well. And so, it's just being aware of all of this, not judging yourself, just appreciating that. And as you move forward, it may be helpful to think about how to communicate your boundaries and preferences, and this may involve trying out some new things.

**Linda:** Absolutely. Narelle I love the film clip. I'm not sure if you've seen it. There's a couple of different ones on the Internet. There's a film clip of a teacher giving her students options for morning greetings. So, students point to an image on the wall before they go into the classroom, and the image has a range of options of how they want to be greeted. So, it might be a fist pump, a high five might be a dance or a wave, a hug or a jump. And I think this is great because it gives students autonomy so some choice and control about a way to communicate how they want to be greeted in a way that really feels safe for them. And I get that this isn't immediately translatable to all social situations and workplaces, but it does raise the question, you know, how do we communicate what feels good for us in terms of greeting each other whilst social distancing as well, and, you know, in a way that saves us from suffering the awkwardness of the handshake versus the elbow bump, you know, is it busting out the funky chicken or dusting off your moonwalk moves? So, what do you think?

**Narelle:** Narelle Yeah, it's a great opportunity, isn't it? And you really do consider how you're going to do things right, right for you, but also where we can tweak. So, we know we're checking in with QR codes. And in Australia we now have the addition of showing our double vax situation via this check in flashing that green tick. When you go out and about in cafes and medical appointments, that kind of is helping us with our social interaction in some ways because there's an expectation in these locations of what to do. It becomes a little bit different in terms of workplaces or families or friends or other situations where, you know, Linda and I have talked about, can you ask if someone's double vaxed or not? I don't know if we've got an etiquette around that any, you know, at the moment or if we can really do that, you know.

**Narelle:** Do we walk around just showing our app, flashing the green, those sorts of things. So being around others will be the next challenge. So, three things I've been thinking about that might help is, number one, remember, you can't change those who will not socially distance or who won't wear masks per the regulations. What you can change is how you respond. And this is a big one because I know I've shifted through the frustration of, well, everyone is just climbing in here. We need to just give a bit of a space. You know, sometimes it's quite obvious when there's no masks being worn where we, you know, there are spaces that should be and really having to go, right. There's no point in me mouthing off or getting angry with myself or verbalising it to my partner or whoever I'm with. The best thing I can do is change how I respond to it, make sure I'm doing the right thing, that I navigate those environments as safely as I can with how I want to do it. The second thing is how you engage with others is your choice. You don't have to do the hug or the kiss if you don't want to. And secretly I'm putting my hand up and going, Thank you. You know, I found that so awkward pre-COVID with the majority of people, particularly people that you don't really know very well. But there's just that expectation. You go in for the hug, the personal space kiss, and it's like, Oh, sometimes I'm like, Oh, I get a bit shaky. It's like, I can't do this. So, I'm kind of glad. Now we've got these chance to go, Hey, elbow greetings are really common. Now all we can say, you know, I'm just waving or I'm just giving you an air. High five. And it’s sort of embracing these new ways that can help us. So, seeing it, flipping it from going, oh, gosh, I've got to figure this out to actually I'm really confident with this is how I what I want to do and how I want to do it. So, we're embracing your decision. And the key is that communication visually and verbally. And I saw this great initiative in a workplace recently where there was three coloured wristbands. They're kind of like traffic lights on your wrist. Red was no touch. Orange was asking me. Green was happy to hug or handshake. So he's placing these out there that there's opportunity to explore different ways of working and maybe as leaders or even our friendship and family groups exploring different ways that make it easy for us as well and easy for each other to navigate these different changes, especially for those who are feeling less confident, those who are feeling a little bit anxious, but sort of that mutual respect is we're actually all navigating it as well. So, the third thing I've been thinking about is don't assume how you want to engage with others is how they want to as well. So, there's a mutual respect and right to pass to come into play as we figure out new ways of doing things.

**Linda:** Absolutely. I love that, Narelle. And, you know, I was reflecting on why do we have this habit of the handshake like pre-COVID, what's that all about? And, you know, it goes back historically. Shaking hands or the grabbing of the forearm was a way of ensuring that you’re the person you were greeting wasn't carrying any weapons. And so. So, I was actually thinking about its relevance kind of day to day because, you know, we generally don't pat people down for weapons, right?

**Narelle:** I didn't know this. That's fascinating.

**Linda:** So, I was thinking, you know, is it about how do we develop that kind of that sense of trust and rapport? If we're not, then, you know, are having that kind of physical touch or that handshake or, you know, nothing up my sleeve.

**Narelle:** Hey, presto.

**Linda:** What do we do? All right. Okay, so let's end with a quick piece of advice on how to help us put this into action. So, the first step is to notice any fixed mindset thinking. So just in what situations does it arise for you? Is it helpful or would a growth mindset be more helpful in the end? So, for me, I still have this thing about crosswords. I'm trying to do a crossword every night, but I have this fixed mindset going, you are no good at crosswords, but I am getting better. And I have to say sometimes I just put letters in there, you know, that don't really fit. That's okay.

**Narelle:** Self-compassion.

**Linda:** All right. So, the second step is to ask it in a critic to step aside. So, in episode two on Self Compassion, we talked about that in a critic. You know that little kind of voice in your head that can sometimes be a bit limiting. So, you know, if you do think to yourself, I can't do this, add the word yet, I can't do this yet, and it then has a different kind of feel to it or, you know, replace the word failing with the word learning. You're not failing, you're just learning. So, let's look for opportunities to try out new ways of doing things and reward yourself for the process rather than the outcome. And, you know, accept that things may not work out how you anticipated initially. And again, this is where that sense of self compassion comes in, knowing that other people have been in similar situations and being kind to yourself about that and ready to try again. The American positive psychology guru Sonja Lyubomirsky, in her book, A Practical Guide to Getting the Life You Want, The How of Happiness, looked at the How and Why. So, strategies that work in relation to our engagement with them. And she identified five critical mechanisms of action. So, the first one is positive emotion. So, in this instance, celebrate your effort and your progress over achievement and celebrate your actions over traits. So, this way you can amp up the positive emotions along the way. And of course, it doesn't have to be a big burst of emotion. Refer to our first podcast on emotions. Frequent bursts of curiosity or interest or joy. Delight or pride will also do the trick. So, this is about being able to acknowledge the progress that you've made. So, Narelle, what about you?

**Narelle:** Yeah, really nice points there, Linda. And our first podcast on emotions will be a great support as we uncover this, particularly in new ways of doing things. And I also want you to think about we've all had a chance to look at how we've changed, the ways we've been doing things. And this has been great for things that we didn't like doing in the past. So pre-COVID, can't believe I'm saying past it seems it seems so odd but pre-COVID days and you know we started to think about as we move into different ways of working and out of lockdowns and living with COVID, where is the opportunity to change the way you have been engaging with others or perhaps doing things that are more aligned with your intentions and values? So, I'm advocating for the positive emotions of embracing curiosity and awareness at this stage.

**Linda:** Nice. Okay. So, our second strategy here is about timing and also variety. So, I love this. I think that, you know, new ways of thinking and acting can fulfil our desire for variety or that sense of kind of psychological richness. And it can also protect us from becoming really ho hum and falling into that hedonic treadmill. So, trying out new things can also be a little more exciting and stimulating for us as well.

**Narelle:** Nice. I'm thinking about taking the time to rethink things and embracing these. So, as you come out of lockdowns, ask yourself, where do you want to invest your energy and time?

**Linda:** Hmm. Great. So, the third strategy is in relation to social support. So, find a buddy or a partner to try out new things with and they might be able to offer you some mentoring, maybe some practical help, or even some emotional support to celebrate your progress along the way. And in terms of new ways of doing things prior to COVID, I would of course hit the gym for my exercise. Now I just jump online with a couple of friends every few days and we work out to a and we work out to a dance class or, you know, an exercise video online, which is just great. We can do it at our own pace. What about you, Narelle?

**Narelle:** I love this so much and I would also say observe and watch what others are doing. Remembering you can go at your own pace and you don't have to keep up with all the cool kids who are throwing themselves back into everything. Just go with what is right for you. Small steps with meaningful connexions.

**Linda:** So important. So, the fourth strategy is motivation, effort and commitment. So, we know success comes from dedicated effort. So, think about why you want to do things in new ways. Is it because you feel you need to adapt to the changing circumstances because you want to keep advancing? Or is it something more? And I think this is the opportunity to really reflect on how this fits within your values. We know that taking action that is aligned with your values. So, what's important to you can help you stay the distance. If it's not important to you, then you might want to kind of tweak the goal or behaviour so perhaps that it feels more authentic.

**Narelle:** Yes, yes, yes, yes so much to this, Linda, really connecting with your authenticity and I'd say listen to your intuition to help you with this and remember that there are things you can change and then there's other things that you can't. So that's that sphere of control. And, you know, where does that sit and how is it there to support you as well so you can control your emotions, behaviours, reactions, thoughts where you want to go and what you want to do. How you listen to your intuition, to where you want to go and be with emotionally, spiritually, physically is a part of that. So, thinking about what does that mean for you as you come out of lockdown?

**Linda:** Absolutely. And the fifth strategy is around habit. And I think this is really where Hebbs Law comes in that neurons that fire together, wire together. So, keep at it and remember to be self-compassionate when things don't go as planned.

**Narelle:** Yeah, definitely. Small steps repeated over time have impact. So, if you're looking to embrace new ways of being set, a goal for yourself and coming out of lockdown, embrace your curiosity to do things in new ways, in ways that are more aligned to you and kinder to our community as well. Take a small step each day towards this goal, and when you check in with yourself in a few months’ time, you'll be surprised at just how much you have shifted. And remember, you don't have to do anything how you used to do it. Coming out of lockdown is a change and change equals opportunity.

**Linda:** Absolutely. So, for practical tips, strategies and practises.

**Narelle:** Yeah. So, I'm going to say one tip and I'm going to say check out the Action for Happiness November calendar, because that's all about new ways of doing things. It's not about just COVID, it's about anything and everything. But there's a loads of daily activities help you consider doing things in new ways. And there's also Calendars Archive from previous months. So, you flip back to the previous November as well for further inspiration to help you think about doing things in new ways.

**Linda:** That's great and we'll pop the link in the show notes for people to access the calendar. So, we've loved connecting with you and sharing insights into new ways of doing things, coming out of lockdown. And in our show notes, as we've mentioned, we will have links that might support you in this as well. We do want to know what you think have been inspired by or questions you'd like answered. So, leave a review on Apple Reviews, help us to be found and help us help others. And you're sharing is also an action to help others as well. Or you may like to leave a comment or question and you can do this via our Instagram, Facebook or LinkedIn account. You can find us at www.actionforhappinessaustralia.org and on Facebook and LinkedIn as Action for Happiness Australia. On Instagram we are at Happtivist. We look forward to next time.

**Narelle:** Thanks, Linda. Great chat.

**Linda:** Thanks, Narelle.