

Pandemic Survival Kit

The time right up to the first lockdown was the hardest time I've ever experienced in my life. In my head there was a lot of noise from this downwards spiral that had been going on for weeks and months and then suddenly the world was put on pause – silence. I soon found myself in a small cottage by a stream in Cornwall, owned by my brother's girlfriend's mum (as you might assume, I felt really out of place at first, my anxiety playing a big part in this feeling, having tagged along with nowhere else to go with such short notice). It was here I was handed a token from my brother, a gift for my birthday that had been weeks before: a Fitbit. I took such little notice of it at first. It sat lightly placed on my wrist, tracking my day, day by day. However, slowly but surely, it began to trickle down into my life.

It began with my brother, his girlfriend and I running (friendly) competitions at breakfast every morning to see who had received the best sleep score, a measure of one's quality of sleep, the previous night. My brother (Robert) and I are incredibly competitive, so you can imagine how important sleeping well suddenly became to me. I set up a sleep schedule, a bedtime routine that helped me shut down and began researching other ways to increase the amount of deep, REM and light sleep one can get each night. This included hacks such as working out during the day, avoiding alcohol at all costs and eating dinner a considerable time before bedtime. As you may have guessed it, reconnecting with my sleep, something which I had lost track of during those very dark months in Edinburgh, started to have a positive impact on my mood. It felt like a tectonic shift - it was so obvious how much better I felt! I had clearly found a talent in sleeping well.

The next competition came in the form of the weekly step count total. By this point in late March/early April, my parents and sister had also purchased Fitbits and it began connecting us from across the world. Being in the middle of nowhere and lucky enough to be tucked away, of which I am incredibly grateful, I could safely explore the forests and countryside without seeing a single person (and there were two flat-coat retrievers who were always keen to come along with me!). Initially driven by a want to walk the most in my family, I found what would be my passion throughout this past year. Nothing compares to how cleansing it feels to walk, to explore uncharted or familiar territory, either with a podcast or music in my ears, or just connecting with the sounds of the nature around me. Instantly, topping the leader board was not the point anymore. I hope this isn't too cheesy when I say I felt free. It taught me that I can do what I wanted, choosing my own path, choosing to sit whenever I wanted, to pause, to breathe. This act of listening to my body and choosing for myself started filtering down into my life as well, and within the month of April, I went from the lowest I'd ever felt to the best I'd ever felt. Although I'm not saying that a Fitbit is the key to solving all life problems, just the act of tracking my progress encouraged me to keep going! It became my trusty companion. Oh also, the puppies we got mid-April didn't hurt!

Although I said that the Fitbit leader board was no longer the driver of my walks, my boyfriend Vlad currently beating me with five broken bones in his ankles has re-sparked this competitive side of me. Paired with the weather looking up, I am confident my walks are about to get longer
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Here are some pictures from my time in Cornwall:

