

Reader's Digest

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When Will Things Go Back to Normal? What a Post-Coronavirus Life Could Look Like

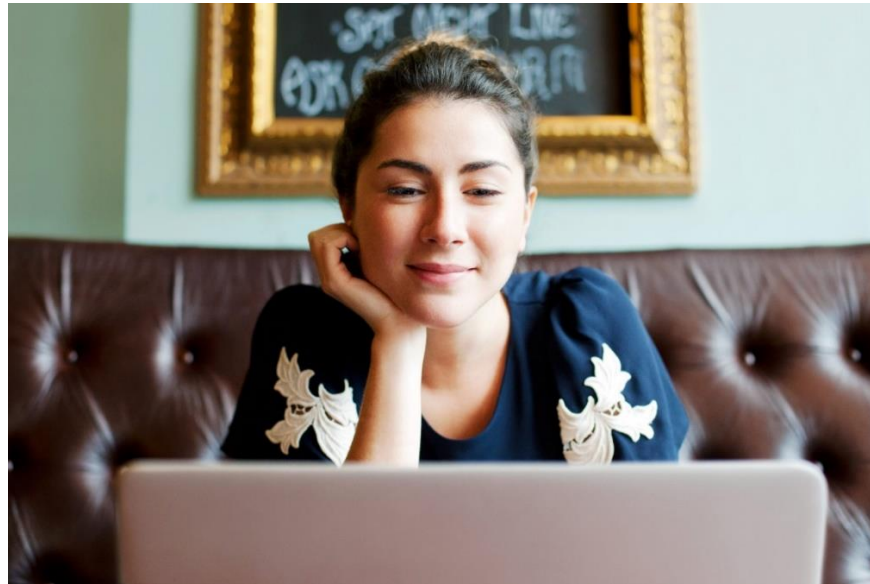
Predictions for how we'll navigate the world now that everything's different.



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Getting back to some version of normal

Most Americans are in month two of quarantining and coming to terms with our new lives during this pandemic. At this point, most of us have settled into at-home routines, where our work, family, and social lives all seem to blur together. But with states like Georgia starting to reopen, we have to begin thinking beyond hunkering down and consider what our post-coronavirus lives are going to look like. Though it's unlikely we'll get back to our previous version of "normal" anytime soon, certain parts of our lives—like education, travel, and dating—will resume, at least in some form. But what's that going to be like? Here are 12 predictions from experts.



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Teletherapy will become more widely accepted

Prior to the coronavirus outbreak, some people had the option of attending psychotherapy sessions virtually, via video chat. While it was gaining popularity, it certainly wasn't the norm—until we had no other option. "Many people came to online therapy out of necessity as the ability to attend a face-to-face appointment vanished," Neil Leibowitz, MD, chief medical officer at Talkspace, a global provider in online therapy, tells *Reader's Digest*. "As with many new things, the most difficult part of adoption is getting people to try it. What both clinicians and clients are finding is that they enjoy online therapy and that it is effective." Once we return to our normal routines, Dr. Leibowitz predicts that comfort will prompt the mass adoption of online therapy. "Many people will wonder why they took time off of work to travel to a therapist in the first place and enjoy the value of being able to just log on from home, work, or even a hotel room," he says.



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COVID-19 status will be part of dating

Though we're at home for now, at some point we're going to be allowed to go out in public again, and yes, that includes dating. But don't expect things to go back to the way they were a few short months ago. For example, if/when we get to the point when coronavirus testing becomes more easily accessible, we may start discussing COVID-19 status similarly to how we have come to talk about STI status in sexual relationships—including potentially listing it on dating profiles, according to New York-based sex educator and coach Domina Franco. "I think it will be intriguing how this changes society in a myriad of unspoken ways," she tells *Reader's Digest*. "Will people be as willing to make out with an attractive stranger at a bar?"



KLAUS VEDFELT/GETTY IMAGES

We'll start flying, again, but with social distancing

Though air travel has come to a grinding halt during the coronavirus outbreak, more than 40 percent of travelers are still planning trips for June through December 2020, according to a report by Dollar Flight Club. Once we do hit the airport, again, expect social distancing to be alive and well in air travel. "Airlines will adjust by innovating how they interact with passengers," says Jesse Neugarten, the founder of Dollar Flight Club. "We can expect to see the boarding process move to a back-to-front system to help customers follow social-distancing guidelines and limit the spread of COVID-19. In addition, in the short term, airlines will not allow passengers to book middle seats." Also, expect to see fewer food and drink services on flights in order to limit interaction with crew members and passengers.



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The interior design of our homes will matter more

Whether you're a news anchor broadcasting live from your basement or an intern joining a departmental Zoom meeting, the insides of our homes are on display in a way that it's never been before, thanks to a dramatic increase in the use of video conferencing. "The result is that people are rethinking what their homes say about them," says Rita Chraibi, founder of International Designers by Rita Chraibi. "Interior designers will focus on creating optimal environments for health and safety measures through the use of lighting, materials, sound, and acoustics."

Chraibi also believes that interior designers will be called upon more to help design beautiful and functional home offices, as many people find themselves in the situation where they are now working from home. "We will progress in planning with safety and social-distancing measures in mind as we grow, adapt, and learn from this experience," she predicts. This won't be the first time an infectious disease has influenced our home design.



VISUALSPACE/GETTY IMAGES

Goodbye, business casual

Now that we've gotten so used to going about our workday in sweatpants, it will be hard to go back to whatever it was we wore to the office before. According to Yesenia Torres, the design director at ELOQUII, a plus-size fashion line, the next few months will see us remain loyal to our loungewear—and go all-out when we need to dress up. "[It'll be] a tale of two occasions. The shift into casual will continue as we fall back in love with work-from-home casual pieces and cozy loungewear," Torres tells *Reader's Digest*. "But for those special occasions whether IRL or virtual, we still think [a woman] want to dress in her best." So, should we be shopping while under quarantine? This is what you should consider about the ethics of shopping for non-essential items right now.



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Rooms will serve multiple functions

Though open-plan homes and loft apartments with little distinction between rooms have been popular for the last 30 years or so, there's a good chance that will change in the post-coronavirus era. "Times have changed, and people need different things from their homes," says Shaun Osher, CEO and founder of CORE Real Estate NYC. Part of this involves having flexible rooms that can serve a variety of different functions, like a home office, meditation room, guest area, music room, library, or nursery. "Homebuyers today are looking for a smart, efficient layout that provides flexibility with no wasted space or excess," Osher notes. "We are starting to look at every square foot in the home and making sure the design intelligently responds to the buyer."



10'000 HOURS/GETTY IMAGES

Working remotely will be the norm rather than the exception

Now that anyone who is able to work from home is doing so, expect this to be more widely accepted than it was before the pandemic. "Remote work will become standard practice, and policies will be in place to ensure people understand what is recommended for that workplace culture," Matt Burns, start-up ecosystem lead for monday.com, a popular workplace platform, tells *Reader's Digest*. "Now that people know it can be done, I imagine many will question office space as a place for work, and rather it'll become a place to celebrate, meet with clients, and gather as a team."



VALENTINRUSSANOV/GETTY IMAGES

In-person college classes may not resume in the fall

At this point, it may be too early to know whether in-person college classes will start up again in the fall, but some universities are weighing its options. In fact, CNN reports that a number of universities are

considering holding off on in-person classes until 2021. According to Eric Feigl-Ding, an epidemiologist and visiting scientist at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, this is the right thing to do. "I think colleges should all definitely make plans for delaying start dates and for intermittent closings and reopenings because epidemiology modeling suggests we may have to go into open and close waves until potentially even 2022," he told CNN. We are truly in uncharted territory with this pandemic.



ALEKSANDARNAKIC/GETTY IMAGES

Companies will encourage us to take breaks

Right now, the idea of work-life balance is nonexistent, given that we're conducting all aspects of our lives at home. And with so much to do, it can be hard to take breaks—even though we know they're beneficial for both our mind and body. But once we return to the workplace, Burns thinks that employers will have a better understanding of this. "More companies will start to support these breaks officially," he says. "A change of scenery can also make a big difference in your headspace. Even going to a different room to do some work can help get your brain thinking differently. When things return to normal, I can see people going out of the office more to clear their heads. Breaks to meditate or stretch will bring you the chance to collect your thoughts before going back to focus time."