

FBL 22nd June 2021 - Learning from Lockdown

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back to Student Hub Live. Well, we're going to kick off our first discussion. I'm thinking about learnings from lockdown. So this is where it would be brilliant if you could fill in the chat box, and tell us about how you've experienced lockdowns. And this space really offers us an opportunity to reflect on some of the massive changes that we've had.

I know it's been a time of fundamental change and shift, and many of us have thought what are some of the things that we can maybe take into the future, and perhaps, what are some of the things that we're really looking forward to leaving behind. But in what has been often a very, very busy time period for us all, it's now a chance just to have a think about that.

And I'm joined in this discussion with Allan Mooney who is an Associate Lecturer and also a Student Experience Manager. Now Allan's had a massive shift, because he came to work at the OU in a time when he couldn't meet any of his colleagues in February of this year. And before that, he has been involved in learning and development in the Forestry Commission as well. So he's going to have some very interesting insights in the fields of leadership and employee engagement based on his experiences of lockdown.

And we also have Daniel Russell, who is a Student Experience Manager again in the Faculty of Business and Law. Before that he was a Practise Tutor at Coventry University. And he's going to reflect on the experiences of teaching and also learning and being part of a remote team. So I'm hoping that there's something in there for everybody.

So let's kick off. Allan and Daniel, what are some of the things that you think, in terms of positive aspects, that lockdown has brought in terms of your own life and obviously work as well?

ALLAN MOONEY: When asked that question, Karen, it also always make me think, from a personal perspective-- and actually the personal perspective is also the working perspective, you know-- and if I was to sum up in a short sense, it's the small things in life. Like everyone being excluded from experiencing some of the small things in life and actually getting some of that back has been of really good value.

And from a work perspective, I think about that as well. From my own experience in the first lockdown I was in the Forestry Commission, the importance of good communication, support of conversations with my team, and making decisions based on the best available information.

KAREN FOLEY: So how were you sort of using those information sources Allan. Because as you say, you know, you had a fundamental shift in terms of that, and yet, it was really important that you were able to communicate as part of a team?

ALLAN MOONEY: Well, I think the learnings for me stepping back from it was actually being authentic with the team, explaining to the team that actually I would be making the tough decisions with the team based on the information that I had. I make all of the decisions carried out, it would be as simple as, I would be making a decision. And that decision would be framed by and led by the support for the team-- so the team's well-being.

So at 23, my team a national organisation the length and breadth of Scotland, predominantly 50% of them worked outdoors-- delivering, learning and development in an outdoor situation, and they were then moved to indoor working, which was a real challenge for people. So I've actually been very supportive in terms of what that meant for their environment, what that meant for their work outputs, but more importantly, what it meant for own well being.

KAREN FOLEY: And we'd like to know what you at home think as well. We've got a couple of things we'd like you to fill in. One is a very simple question in terms of whether or not you feel that you've learned something from lockdown that's going to help you as a student, and also one of our world clouds as well where you can put between one and three-- but something in each box please-- words about some of the positive things that come to your mind in terms of your experiences of lockdown.

And that Emily is going to be chatting with you as well about some of those also. So Danielle, what about you? Tell us about your situation and some of the positive things that you can reflect on.

DANIEL RUSSELL: Hi Karen. Thanks and Thanks, everybody. Yeah, I mean I think it's one of those things isn't it? That the pandemic was a curve-ball that wasn't on anyone's radar, and no one knew this was coming. And then suddenly you're catapulted into the situation where you sort of locked down from home. And I think for me, from a personal level, I think it's-- that period was like a period of enforced reflection, especially sort of in the early days.

And as it sort of continued to go on and we could see this was something that we were going to have to live with, I think probably like a lot of people, I stepped back to sort of re-evaluate what was important in my life and generally and for me to prioritise-- sort of process what I took for granted, what things I wanted to do more with in life, and what things were not perhaps working for me.

And much like Allan, one of my biggest decisions was to make a decision to change jobs during the pandemic. And not actually having met any of my colleagues in person, you know, but to make that change because for me it was a good reflection on where I was in my life, and what I wanted to do. And I think sort of professionally and sort of work-wise and having spent time in my previous employment at Coventry University working face-to-face with students and then moving up moving more on to online, and obviously now with the OU we work very much on online, I think one of the key things that I take forward is just understanding, is having that understanding of the different situations that people are in. And how the pressures of the situation affected everybody differently.

Some of the pressures were similar, but some things were very personal and different. And from a tutor's perspective, I think it was about ensuring that students still felt connected, supported. And that any changes in circumstance we could handle sympathetically and flexibly where required. So I think sort of understanding and flexibility are two of the kind of key words that I would take out from a professional basis reflecting on the last year really.

KAREN FOLEY: There's lots going on in the chat. And I think this has prompted some really amazing discussion. There's one point I'd really like to pick up on, Emily, if we could. And this is something I think that's really important. I'm really involved in a lot of work at the University around community. And Neshra has said that the funny thing is before COVID it was really hard to get people on the microphone in tutorials. I'm sure that both of you have experienced this, particularly Allan in your teaching.

But during COVID lots of people are doing a lot more talking during tutorials. And Tracey has also noticed this thing. We'll talk about some of the other things that you've raised, which are brilliant points. But this whole notion of community and coming together and studying has perhaps made us a little bit more chatty. Emily, what do people think about this at home? And is there more chat happening now in the chat as people are sort of warming up into our discussion?

EMILY: I think people are warming up. I've had people definitely are. I have been chatting to a few people just remind-- well, to everyone-- just reminding them how difficult-- I think I said it before, we've all said it and you're talking about it now-- how difficult it is under the circumstances to carry on with our normal lives. So people have to be really-- they really have to adapt. So lots of people-- so Chris was talking about working from home. People talking about getting to grips with the technology, that sort of thing. So in one way, it's been a big change and a big adjustment, which is hard. But then I guess there are positives. It swings around about. So yeah, I think normally we prefer to talk face-to-face, because you can see people, their expressions, that sort of thing. But under the circumstances, we've got no choice to do things remotely. So it's sort of-- I think it's people are getting braver. So yeah, this is having a knock on effect in people's studies.

Because OU study can be quite isolating. We talk about that quite a lot. It's really hard for people. You know they're studying at home. They're not necessarily going to a campus as such, even though you can at times visit and see people face-to-face. So yes, it's a really good sign. Because I used to support students in my old role. And it can be sort of challenging when you can't see who you talking to necessarily.

So yeah, even though it's hard, it's sort of getting us to work in different ways. So positives coming out of it maybe I think.

KAREN FOLEY: And lots of challenges, because Tracy says, I just have more time to dedicate to study. But then on the other hand-- I found this as well-- you know, your well being, your ability to concentrate, just being stuck in the same four walls can present lots of challenges.

Coren has had, and I really feel for you Coren with this one, it can be difficult home schooling, which means that you're making your time sometimes a lot less productive, and those constant feelings of guilt, and trying to do so many things, juggle so many plates. And Lynn also has experienced difficulties, because everyone's been working at home. And so the place can feel quite cluttered constant. And that whole issue of where to study, where to have your designated study space. And how that is-- being in the kitchen is obviously the hub of the home, but as you say, Lynn, it causes lots of disruption.

But I really know at this point that Tracey has made about working and being really transformational, because I think for some people, like Daniel and Allan, it's given an opportunity to actually do something very different. Because Tracey said that she's moved jobs into a virtual world, which she would never have considered before. And so sometimes these ways of shifting have actually made really fundamental shifts in our ability to think about our futures. Emily, did you want to say some more on that?

EMILY: No, I was just going to say it was basically-- yeah, picking up on a few things that you've said. So absolutely I agree. Kind of what I was alluding to, the fact that yes, there are challenges, but then sort of it's opened kind of new doors maybe for people. But also, when you mentioned-- I was just going to say when you were talking about the little kind up, we kind of look at it and say these aren't huge problems. But actually, so things like finding a place to work-- so I think it was Jeanette-- I was having a look on here-- a lady who was saying, so studying full time, working full time, and then trying to balance that with family kind of responsibilities.

It's just so hard. And then if you're got everybody at home, so people are talking about their family being furloughed as well. So suddenly everybody needs a space to study. So yeah, it's a real confusing one, because there are positives, but there are a lot of difficulties. Some might seem not as much of a problem. But actually, all these little things mount up and can be quite stressful. So again, I'm just in awe of all of our students. They are great.

KAREN FOLEY: Because I think it's Jeanette who was also saying that her husband was furloughed. And so you know, there can be those challenges when one of you is working really hard and balancing lots of things, and the other one isn't. And there can be a real sort of divide in the time. And David's made a really important point here, which I found as well. I mean, we've never, at the OU, been so busy as at this time. Because of course, as David points out, you know, we've been doing online collaboration for a long time. And the rest technology has caught up. And it's been interesting actually being able to support and develop this with other institutions, both in terms of higher education and elsewhere, which has been brilliant.

So 86% of you say that there's something positive that you have learned from the pandemic, which is absolutely brilliant. And we can have a look at our second widget in just a second as well. So we're looking at all the various things that sort of come to mind. But I wonder before we look at that second widget, Daniel and Allan, if I could bring you in here to some of our discussion.

So we're sort of talking about some of these shifts for people. Some of them sort of logistical in terms of the here and now and having to, perhaps, juggle things. But others, as we say, really transformational for the future. I wonder if either of you would like to pick up on that concept, particularly in terms of business.

ALLAN MOONEY: Daniel, do you want me to—

DANIEL RUSSELL: Allan, I mean you go first, because you're the business expert here so I'll defer to you on this.

ALLAN MOONEY: I think if I bring it back to a real life example, first of all in the Forestry Commission-- you know, my time in the Forestry Commission I was always pushing the digital, always pushing digital learning, digital communication, digital collaboration. And we spent an awful lot of money as an organisation commuting for meetings. And a simple theme-- actually now a lot of all the business is done virtually. The learning is done virtually. My L and D are now digital experts. We now have an online management system.

The organisation has improved their digital literacy. There are foresters out there who didn't know how to log on to their laptops the last two or three years ago. But they have embraced the whole digital revolution because they've had to. And actually, what's happened as a result is that the organisation has become more agile. And people have developed new skills. You know, one individual he told me that the skills that he'd learned-- learning now digitally-- he was now helping his grandson with his schoolwork-- something that he'd never done before. And that, to me, speaks volumes.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. And it's interesting, I think-- you're sort of speaking about some of those skills. Very often, as OU students, sometimes we forget that some of these things are really important. Things like our ability to stay motivated, to manage our time, to focus. All of those things we have to do anyway when we're studying, and yet, you know, the things that employers really, really value in the world of business. And yet, often we just dismiss them because we're so focused on working towards our end goal.

Let's take a look at some of the key things that you said at home about some of the positive aspects of lockdown for you. So these are some of the things that you've learned here. One of the key things is about feeling supported and that notion there of support. The other is time and space. And it's no surprise that those are things that have resonated with so many of you. Because I think time and space have been things that perhaps we took for granted in very, very different ways to the way we were able to do it.

But it's interesting because while there was some great things here in terms of some people having more time to digest, et cetera, there's also been some transformations. Things like new self-reliance, new ways of working, being able to be more creative, inspiring, and I love this word, compassion. It's taught us so much about ways in which we can both be with each other and perhaps, help each other also. Daniel, I wonder if there's some things you might like to pick up on from that word cloud, in terms of some of the things that our viewers have mentioned at home.

DANIEL RUSSELL: Yeah, I think it's really interesting. And it's really nice to see all those sort of positive things that come out as well. We've heard so much about some of the obviously the sad and negative things that the pandemic has brought us. But there are a lot of key things that have happened which have sort of, as you said, transformed people's lives in many ways.

And I think the idea that we can be more compassionate, more understanding in our work and in our lives, the way that we can have this connectivity-- picking up on one of the comments that was said earlier about students perhaps being more chatty now because they're so used to using kind of online tools to communicate with one another, that just popping into, like, an Adobe Connect room at the OU is just like an extension of a family chat or something like this, because it's something we've got so used to doing. It has had some really beneficial effects on the way in which we communicate for our studies, as well as our work, and as well as our social lives as well.

So I think when we sort of take a step back and we look at all of those things-- and maybe it's only now after so many months of going through this that we can actually start to really see and really appreciate all those things. Despite the difficulties, there have been some really key transformational things that have occurred for everybody personally in that time I think.

KAREN FOLEY: We asked people at home what their most important priority was during lockdown. And 50% said health and well-being, which was the highest on that chart. Next came work life and study balance, then support network, and then 5% learning new things like a hobby. We at the OU have seen a massive increase in terms of the number of students, because people thought well hey, I can go to University from the privacy of my own home. And I can do lots of things. So people are looking at learning new things.

But that notion of health and well-being has been so fundamental, because without that, we can't do much else. So I wonder if I can ask both of-- Allan, you first-- in terms of well-being, the ways in which we're working in terms of our ability to be employees and employees within organisations has become slightly more fluid in terms of managing well-being for colleagues and thinking about how we work, not only what we do. And this is quite a transformational shift in terms of business. Allan, I wonder if you might like to share some insights from both your work and also your experience as an associate lecturer, and the impact that your shift in teaching has had for students.

ALLAN MOONEY: OK, and I'll mention Associate Lecturer first, because I haven't mentioned that already. And I think it's one that I can really relate to, and hopefully the students here can relate to. For twice, because I've had two presentations during a pandemic, and during that time-- it was the one time during tutorials where every student in the room had the same thing in common. They were all experiencing the same thing, albeit at different severities. But actually there was a connection.

Karen, you mentioned about that community. And I totally agree that community has developed. And I think, from a well-being perspective, is making sure that the learning that has been gained through

looking after our well-being as a priority continues beyond the pandemic. That we still take time to do the small things that we had the chance to do.

Like my allotment, one of the things that I've created was an allotment. It's now got weeds in it, but actually that would be a good metaphor for our life. There are things that if I take to focus on, but we will soon get caught up in the busyness of work. And it's to make sure that we still carve out some time for our own well-being. As an employer, it's even more crucial that employers are totally in tune with employees well-being. They want to see people as much as possible.

I was reading the Harvard Business Review last night, and Deloitte have announced that they have, for all employees, they will decide where and when and how they work for the future going forward. And I would say that is a grand gesture that every employer should take on board in terms of making sure the environment that gets the best out of employees is created for them. Because that's not to say that homeworking suits everyone, because as an employer you need to tune into actually individual circumstances. And those individual circumstances are not always as apparent as they would be if you are seeing people face-to-face. So there's a bigger challenge for employers and managers and leaders to make sure that we tune into that going forward.

KAREN FOLEY: And, Allan, are there any models of leadership that you think offer sort of insight into how we can interpret some of this?

ALLAN MOONEY: Yeah, and probably the model is-- if any of the students here are students in the leadership modules that I tutor, this isn't one that's included. And the reason I'm reflecting on this one is because it's so dated. It's an old model. It's called Action Centre Leadership, John Adair's model. And that focuses on three things. It focuses on the team. It focuses on the task. And it focuses on the individual. And it was a model that was created particularly for war times, because it was a very actions orientated leadership model.

In light of the pandemic, you know, there's lots of analytical tools. And it's still used now in other organisations. I used to work in the police. And it's still used and taught in the police service. So the model assumes that you have a preference for a particular style. You focus more on the team. You focus more on the individual. You focus more on the task. And again, that will change depending on the nature of the work.

But actually, what the pandemic should do is-- because I know I reflected myself as a leader-- that the pandemic actually should focus on a greater focus on the individual. Because without the individual you wouldn't have the team, and you would never have the task completed if you do not focus on the individual. So I think that's probably the greatest reflection on a leadership model in light of the pandemic.

KAREN FOLEY: And I guess this is why the well-being of those individuals matters so much. And I know that we were speaking the other day about how, in terms of your role as an Associate Lecturer, you'd had

to be a lot more pastoral. You'd have to nurture students who were going through, I mean, some of these very challenging environments we've already been talking about here.

Neshra says, that she thinks the OU went above and beyond making it easy for B205 students. And also the tutorials for the remote exams really helped settle nerves too. So you know, we have been shifting some of the ways in which we've been doing things, like remote exams, but also the way that we've been supporting students. What would you say, Allan, the key shift for you then, as an Associate Lecturer, was in terms of how available you had to be for your students?

ALLAN MOONEY: Well, Karen, I probably had more time, because I didn't have a three hour commute everyday to Edinburgh. But that isn't the justification for me to be more available. Actually I found that was more available, because I was actually in this together. I was experiencing the same issues. The OU as an organisation was fantastic in terms of their response to support both the students and also support Associate Lecturers with giving clear guidance and clear support. And our Student Support Team were fantastic in supporting the students and the cohort.

So I probably did make myself more available. But actually that was support of for me as well, because if students were being supported at the early stage, then my ultimate dream was for them to continue and finish the module and finish that module well. And by and large, that happened with that flexible and supportive approach. But unfortunately, some people that have quite dire circumstances during the pandemic, and the only thing we could do as an organisation and as a tutor was to be their lesson support and make any necessary adjustments that we could do.

KAREN FOLEY: And we'd like to know what you at home think in terms of ways that-- well things that have helped or also hindered you during the pandemic. Emily, I'll come to you for some of those thoughts in just a minute, so do put those in the chat. Daniel, you were at Coventry. And you were doing a lot of face-to-face work with students. So this must have been a massive shift for you in terms of your work situation. Can you tell us a little bit about some of the learnings that you've had and reflections that you may have made?

DANIEL RUSSELL: Yeah, thanks, Karen. Yeah, obviously it was a very frenetic time for everybody involved at that period when we all went into lockdown. And obviously it was about, initially, facilitating students to be able to connect from home. And obviously we had a proportion of students perhaps who didn't have laptops, who didn't have access to internet. So it was about what we could do to support those students initially.

And then once online, what I noticed was I was, much like Allan, the pastoral side of my job just increased sort of exponentially. So a lot of emails suddenly took over, because students who I would have had bump into and have face-to-face or 30 second conversations with during the process of teaching them, now they were sort of communicating through email or the sort of burgeoning teams and setting up, you know, teams meetings and things like that.

So a lot of reassurance was required. I think when something like this happens and sort of the apple cart is turned upside down, people want a bit of stability, and they want a bit of assurance that things are still going to continue. So I found myself having lots of conversations with students through the telephone, some posted them to support services, giving them some just general advice about things. And students would come to you with a whole cross-section of problems, not even only just related to work. So it's then about being able to connect them to the right people and the right services.

And so that was probably one of the big changes. And I think when speaking to students, one of the things they fed back obviously was working environment. So we're all working from home. A lot of us are working from home, and some of us have found that really easy. Sometimes for the students they were finding that really hard. The only room they had to that was purely their own space was their bedroom. And then it was the kind of am I spending all day, I'm sleeping in my room, eating in my room, working in my room, and that was a real challenge for lots of students I think, who found that really quite difficult. And likewise, even for students who-- maybe not in halls of residence or students like OU students are working from home, if you've got children at home and you've got your spouse at home, who's perhaps working, again you're kind of having to find a working environment which suits you, but is never probably going to be ideal. Because of all the other demands of life that are going on around you, it's about where you can find that right zone or frame of mind for studying.

And I think the other point I would make, as well, is about what has been referenced about work life balance. It's very, very easy when you're working from home or studying from home for everything just to sort of continue throughout the day. You don't start putting limits and lines where your working day finishes and where maybe your study time starts or where your family time starts. You know, and I think we have to be sort of careful of making sure that we get that work life balance right.

And I think it's been really difficult, especially in the early days of people to do that. And also within that working day, to carve out those times where you need to speak to your colleagues socially-- like you would around a coffee machine or a water filter. And you don't get that opportunity at the moment, because obviously, we're doing everything through a laptop or through Teams or whatever. But you still need to have that kind of social contact with people who you're working with or studying with to kind of help grease the wheels and make things move more smoothly, I think, and have a better understanding of the situation.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, Mark says he found submitting assignments really comfortable-- I'm really pleased to hear that Mark-- and the system and set up an advice from the OU was excellent. That's a really good experience. And Wayne makes a really interesting point-- I'll raise this with colleagues-- will the OU keep on my exams going forwards as I prefer this option. And it is interesting, isn't it Wayne? Because I think so many of these things have changed in terms of do we actually need to be in a room. And if we can do it this way, what might the implications be.

I'm not sure on the answer to that one. I imagine that the University and the Assessment Departments are having a think about the situation moving forward. But it has been quite evident that so many students have wanted to engage digitally and remotely. And I think that possibly being locked in our own homes

has made us try to seek the world out through the internet. But certainly attending tutorials, as colleagues were sort of saying beforehand, there's been so many more people wanting to engage in those spaces and feeling a bit happier doing it, perhaps because they've been engaging in other spaces or because it felt pretty much like a necessity to do that.

So the final sort of part I wanted to focus on here was thinking about things specifically from lockdown, in terms of things we can take forward that may help students. We know there are some key sorts of general challenges that we will always have, like managing time, managing space, et cetera. But Allan, I wonder what are some of the key things for you that you would encourage students to think about, in terms of managing their studies moving forwards?

ALLAN MOONEY: Well, I think back to when you're allocated a new tutor group, you have a discussion with your tutor group in terms of what's going to help you and your studies. And the things that come out of that are generally-- may be about time management-- managing the time to factor in the study, factor in the assignment in terms of the planning.

One of the things that I'm just reflecting now over the many years, one of the things that doesn't often come up is probably the one thing that is my biggest piece of advice for students to support going forward. And that's well-being. Well-being never comes up with a look after my well-being. Have a break from study. Make sure that I have time from myself. None of that ever comes up with students working out what will help them get through study. It's more about learning from feedback, submitting on time, making sure I've got enough time, making sure that I'm on top of the work. And it's all tasked focus.

If I go back to that model, the individuals often missing for that. So the biggest piece of reflection for myself, maybe just thinking about that, is the importance of their health and well-being. Because without that, they will not succeed in their studies, particularly in the environment we're in, particularly in their learning. We'll get into that. But if you are in a better place health and well-being wise, you'll be in a better place academically.

KAREN FOLEY: No, absolutely. And as Jeanette says, you know, it's really important, I think, to look after your well-being by perhaps distinguishing between spaces. Because it can be really difficult, as you say, to switch off from your studies. In particular, if you can just see a sort of pile of books living there, an unfinished work. So it's really important to sort of make those spatial distinctions in your home.

We're also going to show-- you've been filling in our three word clouds as well, in terms of things-- so I'm going to pull one of those up first in terms of what have you learned in terms of study. And then perhaps, Daniel, you can pick up on a couple of points that you'd like to say. So these are some of the things that people have learned from the lockdown.

Here we can see a whole range of things. As you say, Allan, it's about taking care of myself. So that is really important. But also mental health and self reflection, having fun or-- I'm not sure what some of those other words mean-- looking after mental health, shared experiences, and making space and flexibility-- so these are some of the things that people have learned from what we've been talking about today during this particular session. And there are things that can sort of help in terms of those take home points. So that's wonderful.

We've also thought about things that you can immediately put into place and things that you're not so sure about. So let's take a look at first, things that you're not sure about, and see, Daniel, if there are any aspects here that we can spend our last couple of minutes on. So let's see, things that we're not sure about are things like module choice, will COVID ever go, how to get me time, what next, graduation, health, life hacks, nerves, my next course, self motivation, work, study, and life.

Well, Emily is the person to sort of ask about how you speak to the Student Support Team about things around module choice. And she can probably pick up on some other bits there as well. Daniel, you might like to choose a couple of those other options that people have said they're not sure about and discuss those.

DANIEL RUSSELL: Well, I think it's interesting that we're talking about lessons from lockdown. And one of the first things somebody said in there is will COVID ever go. And of course, the answer to that is that we don't know how it's going to manifest itself going forward. But I think what we can say is that we've got so many more tools and so many more strategies now to deal with the situation and to manage things from a study perspective and from a general life perspective.

And it was also interesting that so many of the points that were raised there, as you quite rightly said, are things which we know that we can help you with, we know that we can support you with. We know that we can help you make the right decisions going forward based on you and the kind of life-shaped learning that suits you.

And on the first word cloud, sort of looking back, it was interesting to see how much mental health and well-being was represented there. And also that kind of builds on Allan's point. And I just want to sort of add, as well, sort of the connection between mental health and physical health. Because obviously we spend so much of our time sat down in front of laptops now-- you know, and we've all been there where we spent all day on the laptop at work, and then suddenly we're sitting down on the laptop to speak to family or friends or things like this. And actually sometimes it can be quite gruelling to spend so much time doing that.

So for our mental health and for our physical health, getting out, getting some exercise. I mean, I took up running during lockdown. I was very unhealthy, mid 40s, and thought now's the time to sort of do something. I started like a couch to 5K programme. And now I'm a regular runner three times a week doing a few K.

And I've found that the benefit to me in work and study, being able to focus longer, concentrate for longer, those links are really there. So I would encourage people to try and sort of improve mental health, physical health as well. I remember speaking to some students who-- a couple of students contacted me. And one was sort of saying that during lockdown they couldn't go to the gym. And that was having a massive effect on their mental health, because usually it was like a break in the day where they'd go out. They would do something physical. It added another piece of structure to their day and to their week. And so thinking about how those kinds of physical health needs can also contribute to our mental health, and also provide some sort of structure to our day. So that we're actually, as Allan was talking about,

building other parts into the day apart from just work or study, that we're actually making a more rounded day for ourselves, which then helps us improve our study skills or our focus or our concentration and also our ability to work.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Because, as someone says in the chat, we learned the hard way that if we put our well-being third or fourth or even second, it can come back and bite us. It's really important to look after ourselves. You've also been talking about things that you can immediately put in place. Let's have a quick look at that last word cloud to see what you've had to say about things you're going to do. And I hope that this gives you some ideas about other people.

The key thing here is to be able to communicate and also ask for help. So I'm hoping that there are some things there that you can take away from this session. Also online collaboration-- we have many of these events, and they can be a great way to meet other people and share ideas and hints and tips, et cetera. That's all we've got time for the session. So Allan and Daniel, thank you so much for joining me for what's been a really interesting discussion.

We're going to show you one of our campus tours which we made ages ago when we were still allowed to be on campus. It's still a physical place, although there are not many people there at the moment. But let's take a look and show you. I'm with a colleague of mine, Dan, who wrote The History of the OU. A book about some of the particular areas on campus. Then we'll be back for our next session where we're going to talk about innovating for success. See very soon.

MUSIC PLAYING]