

“Being aware of pupils’ anxieties from learning to swim is one big challenge but with this <pandemic> on top makes us become like counsellors, which is why STA’s Wellbeing and Mindfulness resources are so useful for swimming teachers”. VANESSA SCOLA, SWIMMING TEACHER

We have all been through a hugely stressful time since we were suddenly surrounded by this pandemic early in 2020. Life became very strange and very bizarre for everyone on the planet. It felt totally alien and we were entering into the unknown. We were suddenly

restricted in our day to day lives, no swimming, not meeting friends or gathering any more. So, what could we do? The lack of social contact became a really difficult thing mentally to deal with for everyone. Being isolated for many people was very alien and lonely. Not knowing when it would end and feeling stressed became a very common symptom.

We were all out of our comfort zones. We started suffering from anxiety and fear of the unknown as no-one really knew what was happening. Every day was the same, nowhere to go. Mentally it became so difficult not swimming, no happy smiling faces, no swimming pools, no splashing around and learning how to swim. There were so many questions and so few helpful or reassuring answers. Uncertainty is not something that helped. The not knowing was such a difficult thing to adjust to.

Should we listen to the news or just stay away from it? All very difficult to take on board for everyone. So, all we could do was try to stay as well and healthy as we could and exercise within the restrictions that were placed on us. Being helpful and considerate to others was a new role to take on for many people. A lot of people really did go out of their way to provide all kinds of support.

Not swimming was the worst thing for me as more than anything I need to swim to feel happy; feel good factor. It was like I imagine a bird suddenly not able to stretch out and be free and fly away. The act of swimming is so important to me and the gliding and feeling free in a pool is like nothing else. It is a complete immersive, feel-good thing mentally and psychologically.

We all need a way of feeling mentally good and it takes a lot of adjusting to when suddenly we have no power to do what we love. This becomes a really stressful thing to deal with. No outlet for this. Mental health issues become a massive thing which is not a quick thing to resolve. Affecting everyone in an ongoing way. Not feeling able to do what we really loved for many long months was very challenging. So, we all had to adapt and try to find little moments to try to feel 'happy' and get on with the 'new normal' way of living.

I think one of the biggest challenges was that we in the United Kingdom were only allowed to go out for our 'daily exercise' to walk or run once a day and buy 'essential food stuff.' So being confined to our own back yard or indoors was not the easiest of restrictions. A very uncomfortable thing to deal with in many ways. Being forced to be indoors with other family members and no escape was no pleasure for so many people. Many people of course had no outdoor space at all so I can't imagine the stress and difficulties that some people had to face. One really good thing was that we were very fortunate that the weather was really good for those months and that is one thing that really helped me.

Being able to sit outdoors in the sunshine and feel mentally better really did help a lot. Psychologically we had been forced to adapt to everything we were doing and try not to feel too stressed and isolated. No-one can say it has been easy to deal with.

One thing I feel that has come out of this pandemic is that we have had to adapt and change the way we go about our day to day lives. This is going to be a new way of living. Being aware of pupils’ anxieties from learning to swim is one big challenge but with this on top makes us become like counsellors, [which is why STA’s Wellbeing and Mindfulness resources are so useful for swimming teachers.](#)

