

## Life after lockdown

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It has been almost two months since the enhanced community quarantine was implemented in Luzon to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. Although it came with challenges, the quarantine has kept many of us safe and healthy.



But the ECQ may soon be lifted despite the lack of a clear cure. This was deemed necessary to help us get back on our feet and enable the country to recover economic losses.

The virus, however, remains a threat to our well-being. With many of us possibly returning to work and school soon, how can we continue to keep ourselves safe and healthy? What habits should we adopt to keep ourselves from catching the disease outside quarantine?

### IN THE OFFICE

If your income took a hit during the crisis, you're probably itching to go back to the office and resume work. Apart from the traffic and stress, there is a new challenge you need to put up with once you go back to the daily grind—your safety.

Once you go back to your daily routine, remember that social distancing would still have to be practiced to prevent the spread of disease. Expect that video conferences would remain preferred in lieu of face-to-face meetings. Opt to eat at your desk during breaks and steer clear of the cafeteria, employee lounge or any other place where people may gather. Limit contact for now by avoiding handshakes and friendly pecks on the cheek. Continue wearing your face masks. If you start feeling sick, go home immediately to avoid harming others.

Although your office would have regular disinfections, you should also do your part in maintaining a safe environment.

This means that you should clean your workspace often and wipe it with alcohol if possible. Most importantly, prepare your personal hygiene kit to keep yourself safe throughout your day at work. Ideally, this should contain a hand sanitizer or alcohol, soap, tissue and other personal items you may need to keep healthy.

#### IN PUBLIC PLACES

A report by the news channel service CNBC International on Hong Kong paints the scenario waiting for us post-pandemic. The report shows the plight of a country freshly relieved from a lockdown. Restaurants provide partitioned seating in their dining areas. Temperature checks and travel history interviews are mandatory in several retail shops. Some companies choose to maintain work-from-hands home setups for selected employees. While wearing face masks is no longer mandatory, many continue to wear them to protect themselves from the unknown. All in all, these measures have been enforced to maintain public safety and avoid a second wave of the outbreak. As long as the virus continues to be a deadly threat to the world, we would most likely be facing the same scenario once this quarantine has been lifted.

Even if we will be allowed to venture in public areas, we have to maintain limited contact and social distancing to ensure everyone's safety.

What does this imply? It means that even if you can already head to your favorite salon or café after the quarantine, you should do so with caution. Continue hygienic practices such as washing your thoroughly and covering your mouth when coughing to keep safe. Be mindful of everyone's welfare in public. It doesn't hurt to bring a bottle of hand sanitizer or alcohol, too.

#### AT HOME

Even if we will no longer be restricted to our homes once the quarantine ends, our homes will continue to be the only place where we can have some form of control on the environment. If one or more family members will resume working outside the home upon the end of the GCQ or ECQ, it's best to double our efforts in ensuring a clean house.

Make sure to disinfect your house as much as possible, especially if you plan to receive visitors. Encourage your family members to take a bath if they have just returned from the outdoors, just to be on the safe side. If possible, designate a sanitation area at home, where people can clean themselves up before entering the premises. Continue to be mindful of the items coming into your house, especially those handled by other people.

#### LIVING OUT THE NEW NORMAL

Seamus Power, a professor at the University of Copenhagen, says that the next big challenge of the pandemic will occur when things open everywhere. Once the quarantine ends, how people will react to the resumption of daily activities will determine if a second wave of virus outbreak will occur and hit our cities.

What do you plan to do right after the quarantine? Are you one of those planning to visit their favorite malls, reunite with friends, or visit the gym? Or are you one of those who intend to continue isolating at home and avoiding people?

Whatever you plan to do once the quarantine ends, do it with caution. Keep both your mental and physical well-being in check, and consider the effect of your actions on others. Sadly, as long as there is no vaccine to protect us from the virus, there is no way of knowing what the future will hold for everyone. It's best to stay safe by maintaining social distance and sanitary habits. Until the world rids itself of this deadly virus, the new normal will remain in place.