

As the UK slowly starts to reopen and the country eases back into a long-awaited sense of normality, some of us are reflecting on how our lives have changed in the past 13 months.

Also reflecting on the last year is travel photographer and blogger Nancy Lova, who previously [wrote about her lockdown experiences for BBC Bitesize](#).

We've caught up with her to hear about how lockdown changed her perspective, and how she managed to see herself through while creating the best possible outcome at a difficult time.



At the start of 2020, I had a full-time job as an estate agent, with one of my hobbies – travel photography, providing the occasional paid gig.

Then, one day in March, I returned from a trip to Marrakech to empty streets in central London, with shops closed and an eerie feeling in the air. I didn't know I'd just experienced the last few days of normality in Marrakech, as I got back to my apartment to spend the next few months on my own.

Like for many others, change happened quickly. I went from travelling regularly, working in a lively office and often socialising with friends on weekends, to suddenly spending all my days at home with little activity and a new fear of going outside. I was thankful to have my day job to keep my mind busy and continue to offer structure to my day, but little did I know, this was about to change too.

The UK began to see a financial crisis across many job sectors and soon, redundancies had to take place. In September 2020, I was one of the unfortunate ones to be let go from my job.

At that point, I felt completely lost and, with the responsibility of rent and bills to pay, I began to panic. Naturally, I started looking for another job – applying for anything and attending virtual interviews, but I felt deflated throughout the process.

Not seeing friends and family for a long time added to the stress. I felt alone and scared of the future. I was constantly feeling negative and low and, with no structure, my sleeping pattern was affected. Late nights resulted in late mornings with lack of motivation. I looked, and felt, defeated.

Refocusing on my passion

I realised I was unhappy with myself and needed to do something - even if that meant taking a few small steps. I started off by turning to the one thing that always brought me joy: photography. For the first time, I had enough time on my hands to invest in my passion, so I took the risk of pursuing my hobby as a full-time job. With the lack of travel, I used previous trips and archives to create new work for clients and, each day, I dedicated time to think of new ideas for how I could push my work further. This kept me focused. In a sense, I tried as hard as I could to see my situation as a blessing in disguise.

Improving my morning routine

This new purpose encouraged me to structure my day better. I began waking up early in the mornings and getting ready for the day by looking and feeling presentable. I worked throughout the day with regular breaks and daily walks, and usually finished my day around 4pm. I used the evenings to focus on cooking, unwinding and catching up with friends and family over video calls.

Eating healthier

My diet improved too. Each day I now start off with a smoothie, water and healthy breakfast consisting of fruits and vegetables. I fell in love with cooking and looked forward to preparing something new for dinner, as I found this to be therapeutic.

Positive thinking

The biggest change was my thought process and how I was going to change the way I viewed my situation. This was more challenging, as I had to take my mind from a constant state of worry to positive thinking and the belief that everything would work out.

For this, I firstly started off each morning with gratitude and said out loud up to ten things I was thankful for. I then actively looked for motivational videos to watch, including interviews with celebrities who spoke about their struggles and journey. I followed inspiring accounts on social media, which allowed me to engage in similar stories and read inspirational quotes.

Strengthening my faith

Lastly, I decided to strengthen my relationship with God through regular prayers in both the morning and evening, and having faith that all would be well.

Looking back, I realise the changes I made were little in action, but offered huge results and, regardless of the lockdown and uncertainty in the future, I managed to be at peace within the present time. Since then, my photography has taken off and gained more recognition than ever. No longer do I dwell on the negatives that occurred at the start of the pandemic, or allow fear to get the better of me.

The lockdowns have taught me that small actions such as a shift in thinking, a change in daily routine and some self-belief, can offer huge results. This has enabled me to see the silver lining in dark times. I do know, though, that the pandemic has caused great grief for many people, not all of whom will have had similar positive outcomes. I know I'm fortunate to have been able to make the best of a bad situation and I hope my experience can offer inspiration to some.