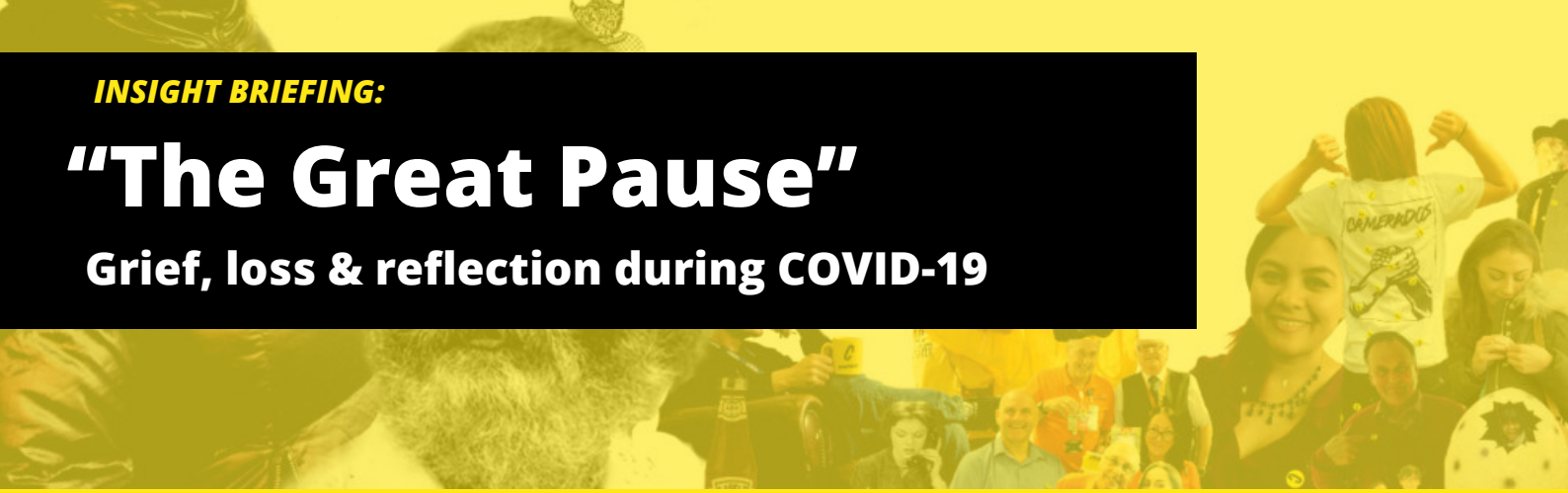
***INSIGHT BRIEFING:***

# "The Great Pause"

## Grief, loss & reflection during COVID-19

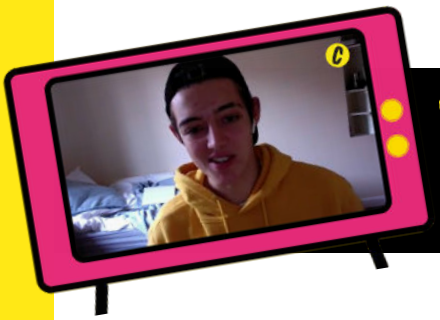


The pandemic has paused time for many of us, with some feeling that this is a positive and others a negative. This insight briefing explores people's stories, experiences and emotions on grief, loss and reflection over the last year.

**"And when that pause happened, life started to reappear"**

***The pandemic as a pausing moment***

There has also been a profound sense of grief and loss for folk. In many cases, this has been in the traditional sense of the words, caused by the deaths that have touched so many. However, many have been grieving for less tangible losses: loss of care, loss of experience, loss of time, which has emerged in the stories gathered from our camerados. James, a first-year student at Bristol University, has seen some of this sense of more abstract loss in his fellow students, who have missed out on what would usually be a year of celebration, new experiences, and new people. James took his A Levels in 2019, followed by a gap year, but many of his fellow first years lost the chance to take "normal" exams in 2020, followed by losing out on the traditional university experience. "The weirdest thing is when I arrived and met everybody, half of them had never been to a Wetherspoons. ... It was so weird. Because obviously they would normally have had that summer period to experience clubbing or, you know, go to a pub. But that was the weirdest thing because I felt a lot older even though I'd only taken a year out."



***Click on the TV to listen to some of this topic's stories***

Other people felt the loss of care from providers such as the NHS. Sally tells a story of her step-daughter breaking her hip in January 2020 and being discharged from hospital just before the first lockdown came into effect. "She's had absolutely no follow-ups. There's been no physio, there's been no OT. And, actually, she's not weight-bearing still. It's had quite a detrimental effect on people. And yet, the Sky man can come into my house and sort my Sky out, but a physio can't come in and do something that's really important and I find that really odd. I found that really odd and really difficult to get my head round."

This frustration in an apparent lack of priorities is echoed by Lynn and Brett as they talk about the tensions folk feel in reconciling the unfairness of their loss of NHS care, while at the same time understanding the immense pressure the NHS has been under. People are finding it difficult to articulate, Brett tells, “but the first thing they say is ‘I know how difficult the [situation in the] NHS [is].’” Carole believes this frustration will eventually bubble over into less goodwill for the restrictions. "I think there will come a tipping point where people just say, 'You know what? We're going out.' We can't live in fear.” These worries and frustrations show the kind of loss folk have been living with, where practical, necessary physical and mental healthcare has disappeared and people are having to get by without it. There are gaps in support where we can see folk are being left behind.

However, not all of the people found the pause in life to be a negative. Gill discussed the stripping away of professional markers in the pandemic and how this has opened up big questions: “Are we fulfilled ... with the path we were on? Is it what we really wanted? I don't know. I think it's opened up a lot of big questions for a lot of people.” In fact, Candice asked herself these very questions, leading to a life-changing decision for the better. “I was so busy working and pushing, I just started thinking what about me? What do I want to do? ... I want to do something for me now, something I want to do. So, I actually resigned my post, which was scary. But I think going back into lockdown, I'm not scared this time. I feel reassured.” Peter, meanwhile, puts it rather poetically: “When it started, I used to call what was happening The Great Pause. And then, remember hearing about how birds were returning to areas that they hadn't been in, the water was becoming clear, that emissions had dropped significantly in various parts of the world. It was almost like the world was just saying 'stop and pause'. And when that pause happened, life started to reappear.” Life reappearing of course relates to the positive environmental effects of lockdown, but also the re-emergence of humanity, of people being more human, more neighbourly, more together. As Tony puts it, “It's caused me to think again about why I've always done things the way I've always done them, and how I can do them differently. And it's also just brought out my sense of community spirit.” So, perhaps while there has been a pause and there has been loss – so many different types of loss – something has also been found.



**"It's caused me to think again about why I've always done things the way I've always done them, and how I can do them differently"**

***What we've learned from the stories***

The stories on loss, grief and pause that folk have shared with us have revealed a few things that give us renewed perspective on what loss is and how we live with it in our lives.

- Loss and grief relate to many more things than bereavement. Loss is individual and personal.
- Many losses cannot be reclaimed and will have lasting impact.
- Pausing has given folk time to re-evaluate many things, encouraging people to be more human again.
- We should normalise talking to others when out and about on these types of topics and have conversations with others in common spaces.

## *A #BitOfAction*

Here's what we can do to get alongside folk in the "great pause" and beyond:

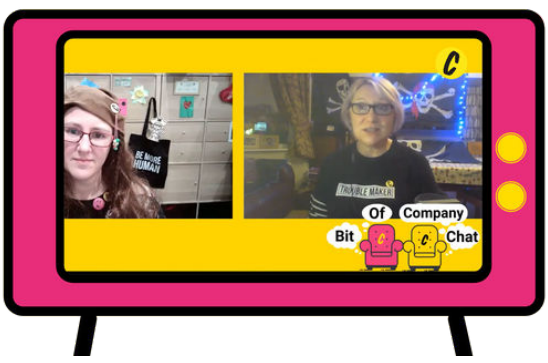
1. Allow more human behaviour in meetings – it doesn't always have to be serious or straight down to business.
2. Set-up a street library in your neighbourhood – or just simply say hello to folk when you're out and about.
3. Create a bit of cheer wherever you are – organise a silent disco, litter pick or do some street gardening.

## *You can watch A #BitOfCompany Chat episodes that explore these topics more on YouTube*

**Click on the TVs below to view the shows!**




***EPISODE 5***




***EPISODE 6***

## About The Project

Camerados is a growing global movement of people who get through tough times by looking out for each other. The movement's Public Living Rooms are a space for people to chat and be alongside one another and, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, they've created virtual Public Living Room spaces known as the #SpoonRoom that keep these connections and conversations going.

People's Voice Media meanwhile, is committed to supporting folk to bring about positive social change through the Community Reporter movement. Community Reporting is a form of digital storytelling that focuses on the gathering and sharing of lived experiences, and using these stories to start conversations of change between different people, groups and organisations.

Thanks to the Emerging Futures Fund from the National Lottery Community Fund, the Association of Camerados and People's Voice Media have come together to look at people's experiences of the pandemic, and create spaces in which different voices could be heard. Over 65 stories have been gathered and we've produced five insight briefings summarising what we've learned from listening to folk. We also created an online chat show – #BitOfCompanyChat – where we've talked about some of the themes in the stories a bit more and thought of bits of action we can take to overcome them together.

Find out more at https://www.camerados.org and https://peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk

