

Lockdown diaries: Helen, at home with 8-month-old baby and DJing partner

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Daily dance parties, taking care of the “sprog” (UK term for child), running up and down the stairs, ordering local beer, yoga, checking the news only *once* a day... Helen offers a lot of coping techniques to help us stay positive and active throughout this quarantine.

Helen Macrae, originally from Birmingham, has been living in Madrid for 12 years and spent the last 8 years working in educational publishing. She's currently off work looking after her 8-month-old baby. She's also quarantined with her partner, from New Mexico, who's an educator and DJ providing [live mixing sessions daily](#) online so you can even join them!

What was your life like just before the lockdown vs. today?



I was away in the Pyrenees with my partner and our 8-month-old baby as it had snowed recently and we wanted to go skiing! When things started kicking off we considered staying up there, but when they shut the ski area and shortly afterwards announced the lockdown, we decided to drive back to Madrid.

I'm currently on *excedencia* (unpaid leave) so luckily I don't have to juggle working from home and childcare, which I know a lot of people are struggling with right now. My partner works at a university so he's teaching all his classes online, which he's actually pretty awesome at as he just finished a masters in Instructional Design. As for the baby, she's delighted to have both parents around all day.

Have you noticed any acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?

The general level of positivity, creativity and concern for others has really impressed me – it gives me hope for the human race! Also, we ordered beer from [La Virgen](#) so we could support a local business and it arrived in under 12 hours, so that was pretty uplifting.

Have there been any comical moments in this unprecedented time?

The sprog (*UK term for child!*) is an endless source of entertainment, particularly as she's recently discovered growling.

How are you coping?

Only checking the news once a day has been a massive help in reducing stress levels. Looking after the baby gives us a sense of purpose and forces us into a routine, plus it's actually nice to have the distraction of a tiny person who's oblivious to how weird this whole situation is.

If procuring a baby isn't a realistic goal for you right now, having a routine is definitely helpful. We try and do [Yoga With Adriene](#) each morning (she's great, plus her dog is AMAZING), then at 18:00 when our energy levels are at their lowest, we've been having a daily dance party with my partner broadcasting a live DJ set for our family and friends. If you're at a loose end and fancy throwing some shapes around your living room, join us at [twitch.tv/djstayinschool](https://www.twitch.tv/djstayinschool)!

What goals are you hoping to achieve as our time in lockdown continues?

Ha, it's been difficult enough to find time to write this in amongst all my usual activities (changing baby, feeding baby,

cleaning up after baby, playing with baby, worrying about baby, trying to persuade baby to go to sleep, etc. etc.) so I have pretty low expectations. Having said that, I love baking so I've been doing a fair bit of that in my spare time. Then to mitigate the baking calories, attempting to get my 10,000 steps in by dancing (see above), pacing around the flat like a madwoman or running up and down the stairs in the building. Not sure what the neighbours are making of that.

How has the lockdown impacted your industry?

Thankfully things at our company seem ok for the moment, but I'm sure the next academic year will be tough as this has happened right in the middle of the sales campaign. I also own a flat with my partner which we rent on Airbnb, so our earnings for that have gone down to zero for now.

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over?

Run out and roll around in the flowers. NATURE! Oh how I've missed you! After that, we'll go on a really long walk followed by a visit to the play area so baby can have her second ever go on the swings. Perhaps go and see my awesome hairdresser/spiritual advisor to get my mop chopped and put the world to rights. Beers in the sunshine with friends would round things off nicely.

Check out all [Madrid lockdown stories](#)

If you'd like to get involved and share a compelling story from this ongoing chapter of history, reach out to Daphne Binioris (daphne@veracontent.com) and Daniel Catalan (a96039@aup.edu)