

Lockdown diaries: Ryan, juggling restaurants, university teaching, two books and a baby

It feels like Groundhog's Day

Ryan's goals are to write as much poetry as possible, become a confident video lecturer because lord knows when we'll be back in the physical classroom, and teach his son the names of the colors in English. Also, as someone in the restaurant industry, he explains that for a lot of small businesses, staying closed two months will be like giving up 5 years of profit.

Timothy Ryan Day (Ryan for friends) has been living in Madrid for 14 years. He teaches early modern literature and ecocriticism at Saint Louis University. He is a founding partner of [Grupo Bang Bang](#), a popular restaurant group run by his wife Claudia, comprising The Toast Café, Roll, Slow Mex, and The Village Tap Room. He has books forthcoming with Routledge and Adelaide Books, and you can find his poetry collection at [Lemon Street Press](#).

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

Before the lockdown I dropped off my son at daycare each morning on my way to teach at St. Louis University. I would usually write for a couple hours in the morning as I am trying to meet deadlines for two books. In the afternoon after I picked him up we would go to see his mom at one of our restaurants. She does all the hard work keeping the businesses going! Then the three of us would go to the park together for a little while. In the evenings I would grade, edit, make dinner, and put him to bed. Somewhere in there I try to squeeze some exercise, some meditation, some reading...



These days, I wake up, make breakfast, take the dog out, record a video lecture or answer posts on blackboard, make lunch, put my son down for a nap, watch the news, watch youtube videos of children's songs, do some exercise, make some bread, cook dinner, play guitar, write for a bit if it is at all possible, talk to a friend or family member on zoom, take the dog out again, watch the news, drink some wine... There is not a lot of variety in that order of events... It feels like

Groundhog's Day...

How has the lockdown impacted your industry?

Well, this is a two-part answer for me. First, the University has closed, so we're teaching online. I think both students and professors have been really flexible and things have progressed in as productive a manner as possible. We've moved things online, and I personally have learned a lot about the technology of online teaching. I think this experience will make me a better teacher.

Second, the restaurants. It's been devastating. Restaurants are low-margin businesses in the best of times. I'm talking 3 or 4% profits if things are going well. The only way for most small businesses to get through this is going to be to take on a lot of government backed debt. So, for a lot of restaurants, staying closed two months will be like giving up 5 years of profit. And they probably already have debt! So, my guess is that a lot of places don't open again...

How are you coping?

How does one know that one is coping? Hah! We'll see when this all comes to an end. In the beginning, for the most part, I just relied on the kinetic energy of a routine. After the first two weeks I began to realize this may be a sort of pathological behavior that I had dragged along with me into quarantine. I think mindless motion keeps a lot of us moving through life, covering up anxieties and staving off

vulnerability.

This has been an opportunity to stop, breathe, realize that it is okay to just feel frustrated and even a bit sad, and look at whatever piece of the sky you can see from your window, bask a bit in the existential crisis, and pray that we come out of this as a wiser species that can keep this planet in livable condition...

Have there been any comical moments in this unprecedented time?

With a baby and a dog there's lots of comedy. The dog is being very patient with a child who has just discovered he can be used as a small horse. There's a fly outside the window that's been keeping the dog occupied. That's been a source of comedy. The politics would be funny too, if they weren't so tragic...

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

I want to finish my two books, build a better (less passive) relationship to food, teach my son the names of the colors in English, write as much poetry as possible, and become a confident video lecturer since lord only knows when we'll be back in a physical classroom...

Who are you in quarantine with? Any advice for people in your similar situation?

Wife and child. Love them. Talk. Cook. Be vulnerable. We all need a little extra right now...

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

Bring my son to the park. He's starved for the outdoors.

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

The clapping is about the only daily interaction I have outside the house! So, I'll rely on that as my vision of kindness... I have also noticed a generally kinder tenor to Twitter! But, that may have more to do with the fact that I primarily follow Shakespeare scholars, ecocritics, and bakers... Maybe also just the glances from the balconies and windows across the road. Everyone smiles. Everyone's grateful for just a little eye contact. That is nice.

Do you have any tips for how we can help those in need?

Just be supportive of local businesses! I see the lines outside of Carrefour and Mercadona... Bring that business to your local fruit and veg market. Buy bread at local independent bakeries. Go to the wine shop instead of the supermarket. And buy some local books. Most little presses sell online.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

Putting businesses in debt right now is going to aggravate the problem when we get back to a weakened economy. Provide support to PYMES and autonomos. They aren't the enemy. They want to help. Also, please learn from this... We always hear that we can't do anything about global warming without massive damage to the economy. And, that's true, but we are also seeing that we can indeed shut things down and make painful transitions when it's in our collective interest. The system is just a story we tell ourselves, and we can tell a different version of it.

What's going on in your hometown and would you like to send them a message?

Big shoulders, Chicago! You'll be fine.

- You can find Ryan's restaurant group's info at [Grupo Bang Bang](#)
- You can read Ryan's poetry work at [Lemon Street Press](#), a local publishing house which is also holding submissions

for a new charitable project. More info just below.

Call for submissions!

If you're a writer, photographer, poet or artist currently living under lockdown in Madrid, we encourage you to submit your work to the Madrid Quarantine Anthology which will be printed by Lemon Street Press. All proceeds will go to charitable organizations in Madrid. Submission deadline is April 30th!

[Madrid Quarantine Anthology](#)

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)



Lockdown diaries: Valentina, bringing communities of people together online and keeping spirits high

Continue supporting each other and your community members and we will come out of this strong and ready for what is to come next.

Originally from London, Valentina Ruffoni is a community consultant and events manager who's has been living in Madrid for over three years. She's also a food lover and the founder of the nearly 7,000-member Facebook group [Eat Out Madrid](#). Due to the lockdown, her sister group [Eat In Madrid](#) has become the place to be for community members to share all the recipes they're cooking up at home these days. Check it out.

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

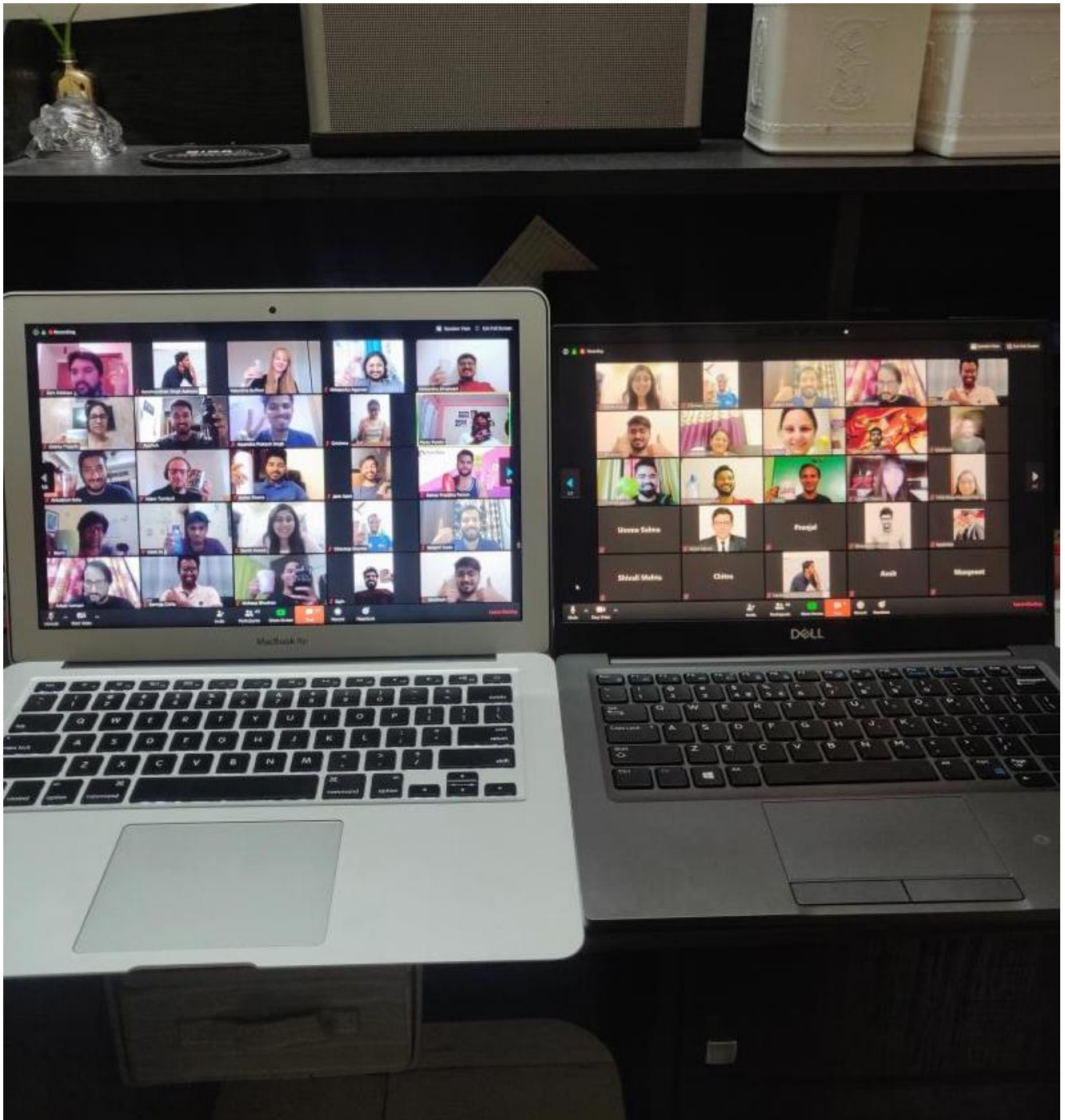
Before the lockdown I spent most of my time organizing and hosting in-person events and speaking in front of large audiences moving all around the city. Now the closest person I have been in contact with is my husband, so for a very extroverted and social person this has been challenging.

I'm cooking more than ever (before this we used to eat out a

lot) and working from home. I'm also hosting several events online and being very active in my online communities, as there's a clear need for social interaction on the internet right now. Providing a place online for people to come together and share their recipes, dishes and favorite eateries to order from seems to be helping a lot.

How has the lockdown impacted your industry?

Unfortunately, the main industry I work in, the events industry, has been severely affected, forcing us to explore ways of doing things online. However, this has been a great time to adapt and come up with creative ways to bring the in-person experience digitally.



“How to care for a community in crisis” online event with [Community Folks](#)

The community industry has also seen a huge increase in interaction and support which has taught me so much about my members and what they want and need. It is during this time that we must remember the importance of ourselves as community managers, how we manage our time and interact with our communities, to keep spirits high.

People are craving the in-person connection more than ever and unfortunately with most of us inside we rely on online platforms to communicate. Continue supporting each other and your members and we will come out of this strong and ready for what is to come next.

And teaching has seen a rise in students taking classes online and has acted as my safety net when I'm not able to make an income through organizing events.

Do you have any tips for how we can help those in need?

As the founder of [Eat Out Madrid](#) and [Eat In Madrid](#) I'm a big advocate of supporting the food and drink industry especially during this time. Many businesses are still open offering delivery of their products or even gift certificates for future visits, so I always encourage people to reach out to their favorite places and help where they can. Other ways you can help is by simply leaving a review within the community or on their dedicated sites which helps attract future customers and when this is all over, we can go and enjoy their amazing offerings once again.

How are you coping?

Mondays seem to be the worst day, I'm not sure why because half the time I have no idea what day it is. I'm a big food lover, but surprisingly not a fan of breakfast, however I've learnt how important it is to get into a routine and start the day off right with good wholesome food and continue throughout

the day. It has definitely helped me curb my temptation for snacks throughout the day.

One other thing I would highly suggest is getting dressed. It is so easy to sit in your pyjamas all day, but I've found myself become way more productive by doing this. Plus you never know when you may need to jump on a video call with friends, family, clients or anymore for that matter. #alwaysbeprepared

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



The 8pm daily routine of clapping for the medical staff that others have mentioned has been especially uplifting. One of our neighbors has a speaker and disco lights and plays *Resistiré* by Duo Dinámico followed by *I will survive* by Gloria Gaynor, it is a great way for the community to come together even though we may have never met each other before. I hope that when we can come out and socialize in person again we can celebrate that we made it through the situation and our residential community can continue to support each other.

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

We moved into a new apartment in February and I'm determined to finish unpacking my stuff out of boxes. I keep looking at them and saying tomorrow... I really have no excuse. I have also started a little herb garden so I hope that soon I'll be able to enjoy some fresh oregano, coriander, parsley and basil on my food. I just hope the rain holds off so they don't drown outside.

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

I think the first thing would be to take a long walk, I am very fortunate to have a large Carrefour literally 2 minutes from my door but that means the walk isn't so long. I miss the change of scenery and seeing people and cars around going about their day.

Who are you in quarantine with? Any advice for people in your similar situation?

I am in quarantine with my husband. This situation has come at a somewhat good time for us as he works away a lot and we often don't get to spend much time together. We're enjoying being able to live together, cook and support each other during these uncertain times.

Something we've been doing is trying to avoid listening in and watching the daily news constantly as we can easily be overpowered by information which can only lead to panic. For others quarantined in couples, take this moment to enjoy each other's company and take each day as it comes together.

- You can connect with Valentina on [LinkedIn](#)
- Join Valentina's Facebook online communities [Eat Out Madrid](#) & [Eat In Madrid](#), as well as [CMX Connect Madrid](#)
- Also read Valentina's article on our sister publication The Content Mix: "[How I grew multiple online communities and became a thought leader in my niche](#)"

Check out all [Madrid lockdown stories](#)

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Food4Heroes: Madrid restaurants come together to cook and deliver free meals directly to hospitals

We're an open platform with over 90 partners among restaurants and brands. We cook and distribute food for free, to support our health care workers in the fight against COVID-19. Because our heroes wear white coats and our motivation is born from their effort – Food4Heroes

We all know that Madrid is one of the hardest-hit cities in the world right now, and restaurants have had to shut their doors to the public until further notice (sans delivery and takeaway). But that hasn't stopped them from opening up their kitchens and doing their part to make this situation better for all.

Today we'd like to give a well-deserved shout-out to the volunteer-based initiative [Food4Heroes](#), in which over 90 Madrid establishments have come together to prepare meals and deliver them daily to hundreds of medical professionals in hospitals across the city (and the country) – especially to those working in ICU and ER.

Food4Heroes started on March 13th when the CEOs of the

restaurant group [Grosso Napoletano](#) sent a WhatsApp message to all their contacts so they could deliver pizzas to Madrid's hospitals. It went viral – hundreds of messages from medical professionals came in from dozens of different hospitals – which motivated even more partners to volunteer and join forces to show their support.



Managers of [Grupo Larrumba](#) restaurant group, one of the participants in #Food4Heroes

Now, Food4Heroes has become an open platform with a simple format: health care workers contact the group by email (info@grossonapoletano.com) to tell them what they need. The group collaborates with its partners to make it happen, and then they create WhatsApp groups with the health care workers to coordinate time and place of delivery. The food trucks drop off the meals outside the hospitals, normally near the ER doors, and the health care workers go out to pick it up.

It's incredible that through WhatsApp and solidarity, hot meals are being delivered to hospitals daily. As we can see from Food4Heroes, despite all the hardship that's going on, there's a lot of good that's happening as well. This is one of the many heartwarming ways in which the city is expressing its admiration and appreciation towards hospital workers, such as the citywide clap every evening (with the designated hashtag #aplausosanitario).

I found out about Food4Heroes from a member of [Grupo Larrumba](#), one of the participating restaurant groups, who also sent me the images in this article.

Follow [Food4Heroes](#) on Instagram to get to know more about their partners and initiatives, and to show your support!

(Source: [Food4Heroes' social media](#) & [Profesional Horeca](#))

Do you know of any other initiatives helping to make this situation better for all?

Get in touch with us at daphne@veracontent.com and

a96039@aup.edu

See stories from our [Madrid Lockdown Series](#) here

Lockdown diaries: Lauren, from long distance to lockdown

My advice to anyone under lockdown with a significant other is to try to understand that this is a scary time and you're both sure to experience a range of emotions.

Lauren Bonheim is a globe-trotter, digital marketing consultant and the founder of [Lauren on Location](#), a travel site that has taken a huge hit following the outbreak. Lauren has been living on and off in Madrid for the past six years, but recently moved back in January to join her boyfriend who was relocated to the Spanish capital for work. Madrid is Lauren's true happy place and no matter where her adventures abroad take her, her heart always leads right back here.

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

I officially moved back to Madrid just a little over a month before the Coronavirus came to Madrid and the lockdown was announced. I work remotely, and so I had just set up my home office and was getting used to working from the quiet comfort of my new home, in my loungewear sans make up. After almost a year of nonstop travel, I was loving the alone time to focus in on my work and catch up on delayed projects.



Police checkpoint outside my apartment

Then the lockdown happened. My once solo working environment is now shared with my boyfriend, who is also working from home. He works in sales and is constantly on the phone. All. Day. My once calm and quiet sanctuary has been invaded by ringing cellphones and noisy conference calls. It's been extra hard to concentrate, but we're working together to find solutions, like using headsets for calls and designating separate work spaces.

Before the lockdown, I also left my apartment at least twice a day. I usually start my mornings early, either by going on a run or attending a workout class. I also work from a [coworking space](#) or a café once a week, and have Spanish classes first thing in the morning twice a week. So, being stuck inside involuntarily, without the option to go for a walk, or meet a friend for coffee is obviously much more restrictive than before.

Even as someone who's used to spending immense amounts of time within my apartment, these 12+ days in home quarantine have been extremely taxing.

How has the lockdown impacted your industry?

The travel and tourism industry has taken a huge hit following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. Many of my friends and family who work within the industry have had their salaries reduced, been forced to take unpaid vacation time, or even been laid off. My travel site, along with many other

bloggers I know, is seeing a major dip in traffic, and most press trips and sponsored collabs have been postponed until further notice.

Do you have any tips for how we can help those in need?



Takeout from [Mazal bagel shop](#)

While this situation is affecting everyone, there are certain industries and small businesses that are really suffering right now. Their business's cash flow has been abruptly cut off and if they're going to make it through this, they need our help. If it's allowed, order takeout or delivery from

local restaurants. And if you can afford it, reach out to your favorite small business owners like your yoga teacher or physical trainer, etc., and offer to buy a gift certificate or front them the money for a future service like a yoga class.

Have there been any comical moments in this unprecedented time?

I'm very fortunate that my partner is a total clown and keeps me laughing daily. Even when things get stressful, tense or scary, we've been trying to combat the negative feelings with silliness and laughter. We've realized that since this whole situation is out of our control, all we can really do is focus in on our happiness and make it a priority in the coming weeks. Whether that means an impromptu tickle attack or Twizzler war, or blasting reggaeton and dancing around the kitchen, our plan is to keep on laughing.

How are you coping?

I'm taking my lockdown day by day. There are days I wake up energized, motivated and ready to crush my to-do list. Other days I wake up feeling fatigued, anxious, and can hardly muster the motivation to get out of bed. It's been a real emotional rollercoaster.

The best way I'm finding to cope through this quarantine is to listen to my body and not judge my feelings. I'm trying my best to be nice to myself and to others. When I'm feeling productive, I work my way through this list of [100+ home activities](#) I created last week, and when I'm feeling low, I

let myself rest.

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

I have such a long running to-do list of things I'd like to accomplish during this lockdown, but my main focus is to simply maintain my normal routine of exercising, working and eating healthy, the best that I can. My other goals include developing my meditating practice, getting some major spring cleaning done, and spending quality time with my boyfriend (although that one's kind of been forced on us!)

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

Go for a run. The first thing I will do is throw on my running shoes, plug into a good podcast and take a long run around the Canal track. Running is my "me time" and what allows me to clear my head and combat stress. Being pent up inside, and not able to run, especially now, has been extremely taxing.

Who are you in quarantine with? Any advice for people in your similar situation?

I'm currently in quarantine with my boyfriend. We recently transitioned from being in a long-distance relationship (*him*

here in Spain and me in NY), to living together. And now we're under lockdown. It's been quite the interesting adjustment, but for now we're fairing the abrupt contrast pretty well. We've made a list of things we'd like to do together over the next few weeks, from recipes we'd like to try, to home improvement tasks we'd like to tackle, and are trying to use this time to connect on a deeper level and get to know each other better.

My advice to anyone currently under lockdown with a significant other is to try to understand that this is a scary time and you're both sure to experience a range of emotions. It's important to be patient with one another, support each other during both the high moments and the low moments, and give each other space when needed.

Another thing I've found helps a lot when it comes to working from home together, is to discuss a plan and set boundaries before things start to get tense. Doing things like designating separate work spaces and setting daily working hours, will help you stay focused, motivated, and on the same page as your partner.

Follow [@laurenonlocation on IG](#)

Check out all [Madrid lockdown stories](#)

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Lockdown diaries: Melanie, international advisor and co-founder of Volition

As an owner of a small business working with other small businesses, it's been 24/7 crisis management and creative ideation mode, while also transitioning to working in a shared space and making sure to take care of my health. It's been quite a learning experience!

From journaling every morning to actually turning FaceTime *off* at times, Melanie shares ways she's learned how to cope with the drastic life changes most of us are experiencing right now, as well as how we can help those in need. And her message to her hometown of Vancouver: please lock it down!

Melanie Ewan is originally from Canada and has been living in Madrid since November 2018. She's a Co-founder and Managing Partner of [Volition](#), an international advisory firm that works with startups and entrepreneurs. She's also Lead Researcher for [Women in Tech World](#), a Canadian nonprofit dedicated to supporting and advancing women in tech.

What was your life like just before the

Lockdown vs. today?

While I have worked 100% remote for almost two years now, my company, business partner, and our team are all based in Western Canada, and while I often work with clients remotely and launched a virtual masterclass in January, most of our services and events are held in person. In fact, I had a Women's Pitch Night Madrid booked at Google for Startups Campus on March 11th, right when things were starting to ramp up here in Madrid.

There are two main ways in which my life has shifted since the lockdown (and even right before). Firstly, I am now sharing my workspace with my husband, who is working remotely for the first time in his life. More on that later... But secondly, there has been a major shift in my work life.

How has the lockdown impacted your industry and work life?

Given that we work with entrepreneurs and small businesses, mostly in-person, COVID-19 has added this extra layer of work and anxiety that permeates my workday. While we have been shifting and pivoting quickly over the past two weeks, today I finally sat down and drew out our response plan, including everything from stating who we want to be as a business during this time and what we want to bring to the community, to how I can support my team at this time.

The first thing for us to address was moving all services and events virtual, and how to communicate this to our communities

across Canada and Europe. We had never held our signature event, our Pitch Nights, virtually, so this created a steep learning curve for the entire team. The next step has been to figure out our longer-term communications plan and how we can adapt and mitigate the effects of COVID-19 both for our business and the businesses that we work with and support.

I do feel incredibly fortunate to still have work at this time – many in my life no longer do. That said, as an owner of a small business working with other small businesses, it's been 24/7 crisis management and creative ideation mode, while also transitioning to working in a shared space and making sure to take care of my health. It's been quite a learning experience!

What does the street look like?

To be honest, the neighbourhood that I live in, Moncloa, is always pretty quiet relative to most other areas of Madrid. The most noticeable difference is that everyone is walking around solo with a distinct air of quiet determination – they are on a mission to get to and from somewhere as quickly as possible. And there are no kids, no random bursts of childish laughter or chatter from students on their way home from school. All you see are adults and dogs.

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



As I'm sure others have mentioned, the 8pm balcony applause is always incredibly heartwarming – it makes you feel like you're a part of something, that you're a little less alone in all of this.

Also, our rooftop area – which we can see from our window –

has been the scene of a few uplifting moments, such as an elderly couple using the space to get in their steps for the day, or a family setting up chairs to be entertained by their kids, who had seemingly concocted a mini dance show for the occasion.

How are you coping?

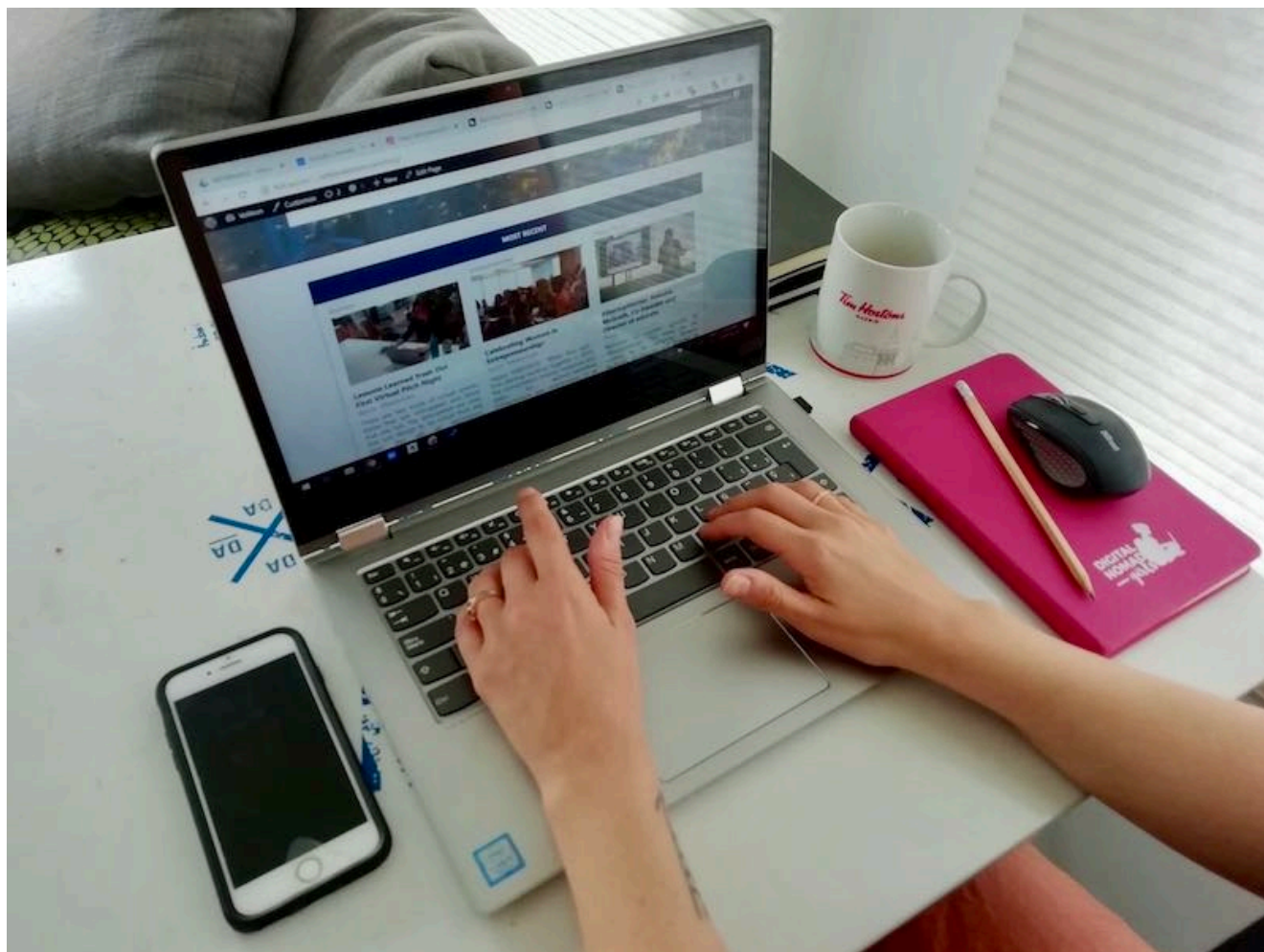
COVID-19 has made my life 10x busier, so for me, that has meant being more intentional than usual about my wellness routine (10-30 mins of yoga using an app, journaling, and 10 mins of reading). The journal prompts that have helped me include: what am I feeling, what do I want to feel, what I can control, what I can't control, and my intention for the day.

As an introvert, carving out alone and quiet time has also been important this week, which seems funny to say during a lockdown. Thing is, in addition to sharing the home space 24/7, my phone has been buzzing continuously, and with daily meetings and virtual events throughout the week, by day 7 of lockdown I was so tired from 'facetime' that I canceled as much as possible, stayed off the news, and curled up in bed by 8:30pm.

Whether you're an introvert or not, I highly recommend carving out personal time in your schedule – a time where you do something just for you, without guilt or judgment.

Who are you in quarantine with? Any

advice for people in your similar situation?



On the topic of sharing space, while I can't imagine what it must be like to be a caregiver at this time, I can provide some insights on the couple's front. The moment we knew that we would have to share the space (barely a 1 bedroom flat), we sat down and compared our daily schedule. We revisited our habits and needs for space, times we were likely to have meetings, and how to work with our very different eating schedules. It took compromises on both sides and a commitment to respecting each others' space and not being offended by the need for alone time.

We agreed on some ground rules, and have also talked through how we can support and motivate each other in ways that we need. Each day we talk about what each of us wants to achieve that day and what our schedule looks like. We also have a food plan in place so that we don't have to think much about that – on the food front I admit I am super lucky as my husband loves to cook and food, tea, and wine just magically appear by my side 2-3 times a day. I had to adjust my eating schedule for this, but was more than happy to make the “sacrifice”!

The key thing for us was to lean into our individual strengths and then just communicate, communicate, communicate. **Earplugs and random dance parties have also helped.**

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

Go out for food. Even though we don't eat out that often, we have already been dreaming about our favourite restaurants and just lounging on a terrace in the sun, wine glass in hand. I have a list of all of the places that I want to visit as soon as we can, and I'm also foreseeing lots of picnics.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

That's a good question. When everything first started happening I really struggled to find resources in English that clearly captured what was going on in Spain and what the government was recommending. While I have been learning

Spanish, it's not up to snuff for situations like this, so this gap caused some anxiety for me. Even now my main source of information is [El País English](#) (Twitter account). Thankfully, I have good friends here who have sent me the most urgent news, and Google Translate for Twitter is fantastic.

I know that offering translations of official announcements, updates and recommendations is not at the top of the priority list, but it is important to ensure that all those in your country are informed. I also know that this has been an issue in many countries – my home country of Canada was just called out for not providing sign language translations of urgent announcements. Just something to consider to ensure that urgent communications are accessible for all.

Have there been any comical moments in this unprecedented time?

Of course! These days I seek out moments of laughter, and my partner often has *The Tonight Show: At Home Edition* or *Trevor Noah at Home* on during our lunch break. My favourite comical moments are the random things that we end up doing in our daily life. For instance, recently I started hopping around the kitchen (because, why not) and Tom decided to start copying my every move...it turned into a ridiculous game that took up a good 5 minutes, got us some exercise, and left us in a pile of giggles. It made no sense, but that was the beauty of it.

Do you have any tips for how we can help

those in need?

There are so many ways! First off, ask what you can do to help – ask your community, ask your friends and family, and truly listen to what they say. If you can't directly help, often someone in your network can.

I recently reached out to my community to see what they needed help with, and learned that what many need most is access to a support network and resources to overcome unexpected burdens – financial, childcare, mental health. [Here is one resource I wrote up](#) to give back to my community (Canadian startups and entrepreneurs).

You can also help small businesses and brands by showcasing them on your socials and blog, buying gift cards, providing opportunities to continue to network and learn, and giving them reviews and testimonials.

There are so many other ways to help those in need. I am very aware of those who are being locked in with abusive partners, for instance, as well as those who are struggling with their mental health at this time. Research and share local resources for these people, and check in with everyone in your network.

What's going on in your hometown and would you like to send them a message?

Honestly, now that we're in lockdown here in Madrid, my daily dose of anxiety comes from my hometown of Vancouver. I worry

for my friends and family as they aren't yet in lockdown and many residents aren't taking social distancing seriously.

My message is for the provincial and municipal governments – please lock it down! And make sure that support is in place and accessible for those who are in difficult situations with their work – if both parents are 'essential service workers', find a way to ensure childcare is readily available so that grandparents aren't taking on that burden. Make it easy for employers and employees to make health a priority. Learn from others' mistakes!

You can connect with Melanie Ewin on [LinkedIn](#) & [Twitter](#)

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Lockdown diaries: Terry from Desperate Literature Bookshop

The amount of love the bookshop has got from the community is really sustaining. Lots of messages and lots of people ordering stock. Thank you everybody.

Terry Craven is a bookseller, painter and writer who runs [Desperate Literature](#), a community bookshop that has opened its doors every day for the past six years in the heart of Madrid. It's been tough to close, but they've also received a lot of love and support. Terry thinks that solidarity and finding gratitude during this time is very important, as are Zoom meetings, dancing, dressing like you're going on a third date...and having a cat.

Desperate Literature is now shipping books during the quarantine and you can enquire [here](#). They also run a [literary prize for short fiction](#) running until March 29th, so spread the word!

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

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

I think finding gratitude is pretty important in such times, right, so yes, today I heard a few conversations between neighbours, over the streets we were talking to the *correos* (mailmen). People who, in all likelihood, have never spoken before. Solidarity in these times is very important and it shakes me out of The Fear, absolutely. I got a big rush of happiness hearing those folks talking. A blackbird has started visiting us in the shop, and stealing my cat's food, too (I live in the same building). That's pretty joyful. Honestly, though, the amount of love the bookshop has got from the community is really sustaining. Lots of messages and lots of people ordering stock. Thank you everybody.

Have there been any comical moments in this unprecedented time?

My hair is getting pretty comical. That said, I think the Mad Max meets the 1980s German footballer look is probably a shoe-in for early summer.

How are you coping?

Dance every day. Dress like I'm going on a... mmm... third date maybe. Zoom meetings with anybody and everybody. Reaching out to people who might be in need of community or help. Trying to have a rhythm. Turning off my computer around 10pm. Calming the nervous system (without booze), because I have a tendency

to be in fight or flight in order “to survive”, but that doesn't help.

Be kind to myself when I fail to do the above, which is every day.

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

Honestly, I'm a tiny bit weary of being too goal-oriented during this period, both personally and politically. Sure I've a few books I'm working on and the real goal is to keep the bookshop alive, but otherwise if I can stay calm and try to be present then I'm doing ok.

How has the lockdown impacted your industry?

Enormously. So many booksellers I know have been fired, not to mention folks in publishing just deathly anxious about their positions. Any of us bookshops built around community, especially those of us without an enormous online retail presence, well, we're both financially and emotionally isolated. But I can see across the board, over in the UK as well as here in Spain, that indie booksellers are adapting. The folks at [Burley Fisher](#) in London are doing an amazing job (their podcast has the best jingle I've ever heard, not to mention the rest of the work they're doing).

Of course we (Desperate Literature) have a very specific problem: so many of the anglophones of Madrid have gone home, meaning that even when we open it will be interesting to see who's left. There's a lot of questions to be asked about the sustainability of teaching programs that can benefit from folks travelling across the world to teach, who are signed into temporary contracts with very little security and promptly dropped when things get tough.

It's a problem of precarity across the board and the whole point of working with community is to fight against it. If nothing else, we at Desperate Literature can ask ourselves how we do better, now and after. So yeah maybe that's also a goal for something to come from this period.

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

Sit in the sun, reading. Hug my friends. Hug my friends in the sun.

Do you have any tips for how we can help those in need?

I don't know any more than anybody else, but I'm just trying to call around and make sure we're all doing ok. If you're part of a community, there's the question of how to build up financial backstops, how to come together to stop evictions. Talk to people, I suppose I'd say. But as I've hinted, that's tough because the main thing I personally have to fight

against is my own desire to hide away and worry.

Who are you in quarantine with? Any advice for others?

At home: my cat.

My advice: get a cat.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

Stop rents.

What's going on in your hometown and would you like to send them a message?

The UK has just entered a full lockdown, and the only thing I'd say is that it has taken me 11 days to start to get to stability, so stick with it. That and I love them.

- *You can follow Terry on [Instagram](#) and find all of Desperate Literature's social media channels and info on [their website](#)*

- *Also read my previous article about [Desperate](#)*

[Literature: So much more than a bookshop](#)

- [Please share their Literary Prize for Short Fiction](#) across all social media channels and spread the word to anyone who you think would like to apply. The deadline is March 29th, two days from now!

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)

Lockdown diaries: Alan, currently writing a book about modern day Spain

It's ok to be stressed, and it's normal to be losing it. Most of us are. But we are doing it together.

It's ok to be stressed, and it's normal to be losing it. Most of us are. But we are doing it together," says Alan McGuire, who used to be a psychiatric nurse back in the UK. Now a writer and English teacher here in Madrid, he's struggling to use this time to finish his book about modern day Spain. It's hard to concentrate. He's also observed that the grey pollution cloud above Madrid, known locally as the 'boina', has lifted off the city, but the clouds in people's minds are growing by the day.

You can read Alan McGuire's written works [here](#).

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

When the lockdown started, I had already begun to prepare to work from home a bit. In a previous life I was a psychiatric nurse, so I had a feeling from watching the news that it would get bad. Seeing how China locked down the country and stopped their entire economy, the largest in the world, to try and stop the virus, it made me think. Then when Italy got hit, I had a feeling it would reach Spain. My wife's friend that I normally tease for overreacting agreed with me, that confirmed my suspicion that things were getting more surreal in the world (We have already had Brexit and Trump). Being a nurse you always assume the worst will happen, however I never expected it to be this bad.

If two weeks ago you told me I had to spend a month at home I would have thought '*great, I can finish writing my book and I don't have to see people or get interrupted*'. But since it has actually happened, it hasn't been great. It is getting worse

by the day. I find it hard to concentrate and end up staring at bad news all day. To top it off I haven't written a thing. I have to say, this has started out as a depressing article!

What does the street look like?



I live in a commuter town south of Madrid called Leganes. Normally it means leaving a night out early to get the last train home or travelling for an hour on the last metro back at 1am. However now it is nice to be away from the busy centre.

I have a small green area with a woodland near me where I can walk my dog India. It has a great view of Madrid, but just

looking at it makes me feel desolate. Knowing all those people are cooped up stressed in their houses, worried about their jobs and homes more than their health. I think it is a sad reflection of our society. The grey pollution cloud above Madrid, known locally as the 'boina' or beret, has lifted off the city but the clouds in people's minds are growing by the day.

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



I saw two dog walkers talking to each other outside my flat and one of the older neighbours started shouting at them to

not stand close. I thought 'good on ya'.

I have also seen the local street cleaners putting out a large sign outside their depot, saying thank you for the applause that happens every night. **The applause is ramping up here with music and instruments, although it got a bit much when they started playing 'I Will Survive'.**

How are you coping?

I keep reminding myself we are all in this together to a degree. Reading philosophy has helped, and my e-book has been revived with many cheap or free domain philosophy books. Great time to catch up on the classics! Reading is a great form of escapism after staring at a screen all day whilst simultaneously entertaining 4-year-olds or correcting the pronunciation of sheep for the fifth time.

I hope that people stop pretending to be ok and stop this social competition of *look how creative I am* and *look how altruistic and relaxed I am*. **I think it is ok to be stressed, and it is normal to be losing it. Most of us are.** But we are doing it together. In solidarity and there is help if people need it. We just need to find each other. See, even people with dogs are struggling, it is not the golden ticket.

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

Of course, I would like to say go to the beach or visit the UK

to see my family. But I won't have the money, I will have spent it all on baked beans as even the Spaniards won't eat them. It will be all that is left on the shelves of Día (supermarket) after the apocalypse. Well, that is how it feels at the moment.

In all honesty, I will probably be adjusting to hearing about things other than Covid-19. **I never thought I would miss the day Brexit was on the news.**

Oh and of course a beer on a terrace with friends.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

Keep it up and don't forget the people when the threat of the illness goes away. When the economic fallout happens don't forget to protect the people that you govern, the businesses that will be struggling and the services that have saved us.

- You can follow Alan McGuire on [Medium](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).
- Read Alan's article on [The Rastro's Political Flea Market](#), which he wrote for Naked Madrid just before the lockdown
- Also read his [recently published article](#) on the history of Spain and COVID-19

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)

Lockdown diaries: Leah, journalist & author of Madrid No Frills

Both of Leah's parents are retired healthcare workers who are planning to return to work to help with the crisis at home in the UK. She's very proud of them. One of the best ways many of us can also help right now is to support local businesses. As she always says, if you're fortunate enough to have nothing to fight for, then fight for someone else!

Leah Pattem is a teacher, journalist and the author of [Madrid No Frills](#). She's been living in Madrid for seven years, exploring Madrid's hidden gems and neglected spaces, and shining a light on the inequalities and injustices surrounding them.

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



I was in a no-frills bar (Wednesday night) with a group of activists discussing how we were going to continue our activities under the impending lockdown. We were some of the only people in the bar – it was already eerily quiet, and we all knew that this would be our last outing for a while.

What does the street look like?



My street is quiet but for lingering dog walkers, lone shoppers carrying 'bags for life', the odd street cleaner and slowly patrolling police cars. By night, everyone is out on their balconies, not just for the *#aplusosanitario* but also

just chatting away – it's like radio patio but exterior. I love it.

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

My parents, both retired healthcare workers, are planning to return to work (where they met) to help with the crisis in the UK. I'm so proud of them.

How are you coping?

I'm normally out for several hours a day wandering Madrid's streets, chatting to strangers and having *cañas* in no-frills bars, but I'm fine. I'm just worried about everyone else and am trying to help. As I always say, if you're fortunate enough to have nothing to fight for, then fight for someone else!

One way in which many of us can help right now (if we have the income and are able to go out) is to support local businesses. As soon as lockdown is over, [disaster capitalism](#) will sweep through our streets and we'll see Five Guys colonise even the most overlooked corners of our neighbourhoods. But we have the power to stop this simply by shopping local – it's so easy. Many markets even do online deliveries, so you don't have to go out. And bonus point: no dystopian queues!



Avoid dystopian queues and order online from local businesses!

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

Run out onto the street and celebrate with all of my neighbours! I picture it being like when they announced that the war was over.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

Just one thing?! OK, I'll give it a go. Dear Pedro, you're putting a moratorium on mortgage payments for those affected by the coronavirus but not for renters? Is this a class war?

And then when the moratorium on evictions ends, presumably those tenants are out too, right?! This is bullsh*t.

Also, don't reprivatise all those public hospitals! Have you seen the state of the NHS, Pedro?!

- Check out Leah's inspiring platform, [Madrid No Frills](#)
- Read our [interview with Leah in celebration of International Women's Day last year](#)

See all stories of [Madrid Lockdown Series](#) here

If you'd like to submit your story, please email daphne@veracontent.com

Lockdown diaries: Cepee, community builder & founder of She Hit Refresh

Cepee was in Morocco when the news started spreading that Madrid was going under lockdown and closing off its borders. Luckily she made it back in time, but three of the women she was traveling with are still there and are having trouble getting back home.

Cepee Tabibian is from the US and has been living in Madrid for over four years. She's the founder of [She Hit Refresh](#), an online community of over 5,000 women age 30 and over who want to break free from routine and start a life of travel. She's also the creator of [Madrid Blogger Network](#), Madrid's largest community for content creators.

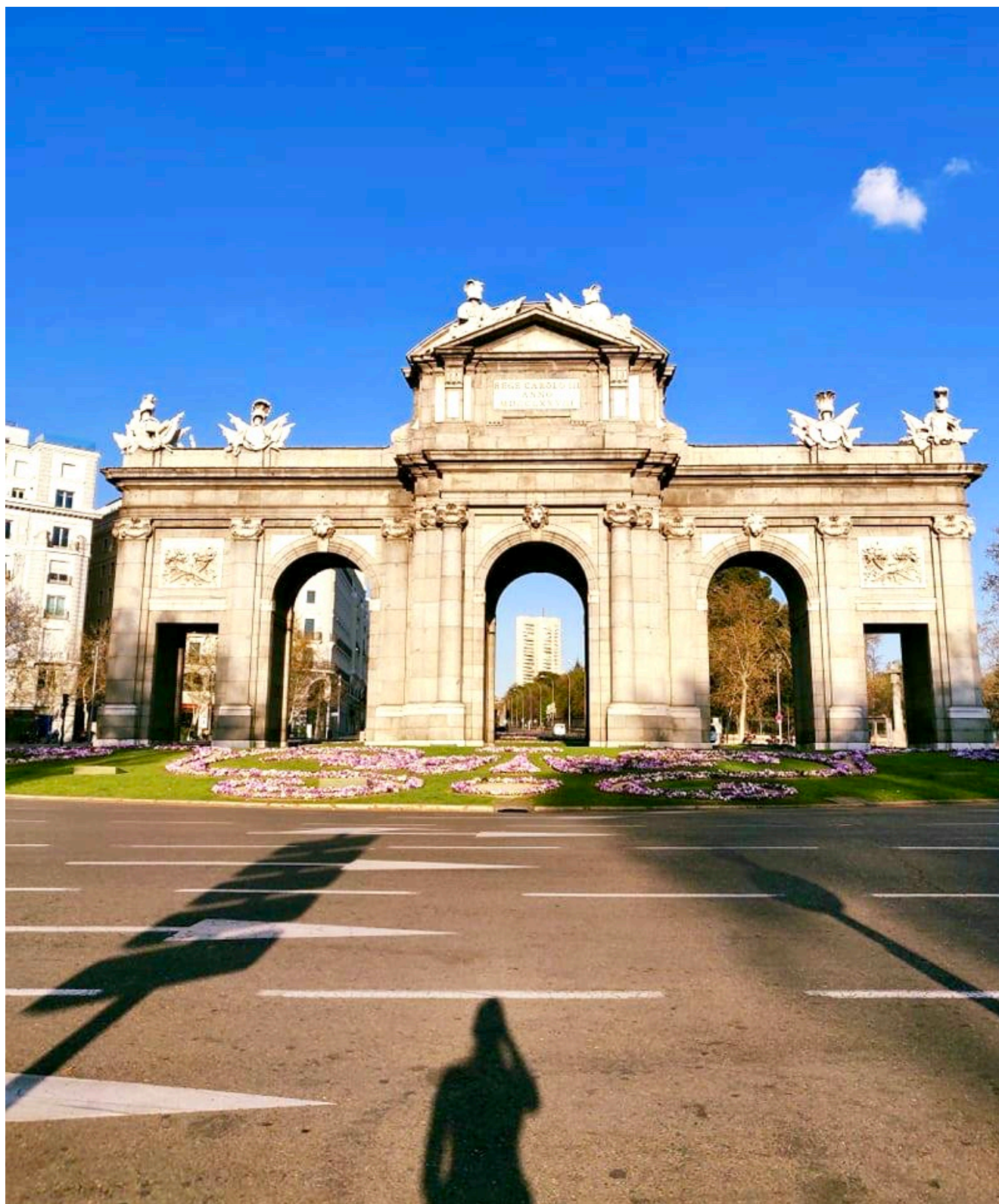
What was your life like a week ago vs. today?

A week ago I was in Marrakech, Morocco. We were just a couple days into my retreat for my business She Hit Refresh. I was joined by seven lovely women – five Americans, one Canadian, and one Brit. When I left Madrid on March 5th, I believe Spain had roughly 280 cases of COVID19. Movement to/from the U.S. and Europe was normal, except for possible quarantine for those who had been in high-risk countries at the time: China, Iran, Italy.

Morocco only had two cases at that point and they were in Casablanca, a city we were not visiting. We were able to enjoy the trip without paranoia but were mindful to wash our hands and use hand sanitizer. However, social distancing wasn't being practiced yet in our group or even in society. Life felt quite normal. The beauty of the trip was that Morocco felt very far from the coronavirus panic and hype that we were seeing on Facebook. On more than one occasion we commented on how lucky we were to be in our own bubble, away from the anxious energy.

Fast forward one week – the impact of corona caught up with us. The announcement of new travel restrictions in the U.S.

for travelers coming from Europe cut the trip short for some of our attendees. A few changed their flight to leave Morocco that same day and when my flight back to Madrid was cancelled that evening, I started to realize that things were starting to change very quickly in Spain.



I made it back to Madrid via Zurich and hit the supermarket as soon as I got home as I heard rumors of a possible lockdown. Today is day 5 of the quarantine and my life is not too different from what it was before embarking on the retreat. I work from home and am used to spending long hours in isolation at my apartment. But at the same time much of my social life comes from the many events I run and attend in the city; we're now navigating how to replicate that online.

I've been using the extra time to work on projects and tackle my to-do list. I'm also being gentle with myself and allowing myself time and space to just relax. I do get to have a short walk outside three times a day with my dog, who has been the best company and cuddle buddy during this lockdown.

While I feel calm here in Madrid I am concerned for three of our attendees who stayed in Morocco to travel after the retreat and are having difficulties getting back home.

What does the street look like?

I live in Lavapiés. My street is eerily quiet – minimal foot traffic and barely any cars coming through. There is a stillness in the air that wasn't there a week ago – *a very 28 Days Later feel*. If I do see anyone on the street, they are either walking their dog or going grocery shopping. Some are wearing masks and gloves, we keep our distance, and most don't even make eye contact when they pass by.

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

Our daily expression of gratitude to the health workers at 8:00pm has become my favorite time of the day. Hearing neighbors near and far applaud and cheer from their balcony and windows is uplifting and heartwarming. It's a moment where you can experience the best of humanity. Madrid is a social city and since we can't be together physically, banding together everyday for this one ritual makes me feel deeply connected to humankind.

How are you coping?

I feel like I am coping very well. Although I'm an extrovert, I enjoy spending a lot of time at home alone. My original plan before corona was to hunker down in March and April to work on a few big projects. I was going to limit my social time so I could focus, so I guess I get to do just that, but without FOMO.

I'm making sure I'm still physically active. While I can't run under the lockdown I can work out in my apartment and have been using the [7-minute workout app](#) on a daily basis.

I have plenty to keep me busy, my dog to keep me company, and a cozy apartment stocked with food to keep me comfortable. TikTok, online communities, and the internet in general keeps me entertained and gives me an outlet for escapism when I need it.

I have so much to be grateful for right now and by focusing on what I have, I'm not frustrated by what's lacking or what I can't do. It could be much worse and I know a few weeks (months?) isolation is a drop in the ocean in the grand scheme of life. I can do it. We can do it!

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

Go for a run! I was just getting back into running before the quarantine. In Italy I heard they can leave the house to go for a run and at the beginning of our lockdown I fantasized about running wild and free through an empty city, however, outdoor activities are not allowed in Spain.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

I have many friends who are *autónomo* (registered freelancers) in Spain and struggling with the loss of work. The stress about how to pay their bills, let alone how to meet the monthly *autónomo* fee, is heavy. My message to the government echoes what Daniel Catalan has said before me, please consider suspending monthly *autónomo* fees indefinitely.

**for all registered freelancers in Spain, you must pay a monthly fee of €280/month, regardless of income*

See all [Madrid Lockdown Diaries](#) here

If you'd like to submit your story, please send an email to daphne@veracontent.com

Lockdown diaries: Cris, freelance actress & teacher

Today on our [lockdown diaries series](#), we're hearing from Cris Vidal, who's a freelance actress and teacher. She's originally from Galicia (northern Spain) and has been living in Madrid for 16 years. All her work has been canceled until further notice, but she also sees this time as an opportunity for self-reflection, creative activity at home, and appreciating the people in your life.

What was your life like a week ago vs. today?

My life tends to be pretty hectic. I'm an actress, drama teacher, and English teacher. I'm also a registered freelancer and run my own business. Last week I was working in several different places that have all shut down. I was attending theatre lessons, rehearsing in a Centro Cultural because we

were creating a new piece, and I was also hanging out with my friends.

Now I find myself at home, dealing with the “gestoría” (tax and finance agency) because I still don’t know how to best approach our work situation (my workmates’ and mine). I’m also in contact with my clients, thinking about how to reschedule pending lessons and gigs without really knowing when this is going to end..

What do the street looks like?

They look pretty empty, just people with dogs and loaves of bread, wearing masks and looking a bit confused.

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

Every time I go through a rough situation I’m marvelled at how many people have my back. From texts and calls to videoconferences and offers to help, it’s really uplifting to know you have great friends and that we’re there for each other.

How are you coping?

It’s been a bit of a rollercoaster: worrying about my work, then for my family, feeling acceptance and calm, excitement

about having time for myself, then worrying again... **I've found out that watching the news ONLY once a day helps.**

Tips: make a list with every indoor activity you've never had time to do and go for it! Call your friends and family often. Treat yourself... I might even create a new script for future shows. Also, use this extra time to think about your lifestyle – what things should remain when all of this ends, and what things are worth changing or simply letting go of.

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

Once it's safe I'll take a train to Galicia to see my family because I'm missing them dearly. I'll also hang out with my friends as much as I can. I'm an affectionate person and not being able to hug my friends or high-five my students is hard!



If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

Please give simple and clear instructions. There's so much talk about the aid and assistance that the government is supposedly going to give us. Make that aid a reality, and for people to be able to actually access that aid without having to struggle through so much bureaucracy. Among all the sectors that are suffering in quarantine, please don't forget about artists.

See all [Madrid Lockdown Diaries](#) here

If you'd like to submit your story, please send an email to daphne@veracontent.com