

**Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy?  
Caught in a landslide, no escape from reality.**



Sound familiar? The opening lines of the Queen classic, Bohemian Rhapsody, could not ring truer in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Is this the real life?**

We are all grappling to come to terms with our new reality. These are unprecedented times, and specifically, South Africa took a very tough line on lockdown measures. Certain freedoms were abruptly taken away from us, and understandably we are struggling with conflicting emotions of fear, anger, frustration and sadness. This is our real life, for now.

Usually, in times where our thoughts and emotions are in distress, I would advise people to ground themselves. How? To find and cement daily routines, like going to the gym, work and visiting family. But hang on, we can't do any of that right now! So, we will need to find (and make) new routines; something as simple as making your bed every morning and taking time each day to have a virtual coffee break with a colleague or friend.

### **Is this just fantasy?**

If someone came to you a year ago and told you about 2020, would you have believed them? I certainly would not!

The year 2020 is like a scene out of a Hollywood sci-fi movie. Who would have thought a virus could shut down the world. To be able to wrap our minds around waging war on an unseen, odourless and silent killer, is a challenge. This is not a fantasy.

### **Caught in a landslide...**

This is precisely how my emotions have felt in these last few weeks like I'm being carried away in a landslide. I felt overwhelmed, and my thoughts, concerns and fears have been magnified during this time. It is easy to lose perspective when sitting in isolation and receiving minimal interaction and validation. Since we are working remotely, it is difficult to read people's body language over video meetings. Everybody needs validation – a simple nod of affirmation or a quick cup of coffee together. This also affects our sense of belonging since we are not in each other's space.

### **...no escape from reality.**

This is where despondency and the feeling of hopelessness come in. Nobody has the answers as to when this will be over. Nobody can predict or knows when a vaccination will be ready to give us back our 'old normal'. The reality is now: remote working, minimal interaction with family, friends and colleagues, and the lingering fear of the undeniable economic impact on South Africa and perhaps yourself.

### **We're all in this together**

- Be someone's reality check. Allow that person to talk, really talk, even if you can't relate to their story. Remember, we're sitting in different areas of the same boat. Share your story.
- Be mindful and vigilant to reality check your own thoughts. If you are becoming overwhelmed by all the news, stop following the news for a day or so. Ask someone to alert you to the information you need to know, like lockdown regulations etc.

- Respond to people, as quickly as possible. As humans, we assume the negative in the absence of positive information –and then understand that this is magnified at the moment. So, return calls or at least text as to when you will be available to chat. Send a quick response to an email, so the person who sent the email knows you have seen it, so they don't jump to incorrect assumptions.
- Affirm your peers. Have a 'virtual' cup of coffee. Give positive feedback when possible.
- Lastly, make a conscious decision to understand that people have the right to their own opinions, thoughts and emotions on this new reality. Please don't minimise anyone's reality.

**Be safe everyone! I'm here for you xxx**