

Time to Think

Open University Journeys in British and Irish prisons during the years of conflict, 1972-2000

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This audio appears in the OpenLearn course, *Coping with isolation: Time to Think*: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/coping-isolation-time-think/content-section-overview>

INTERVIEWER:

*Can you give some advice to people today dealing with the uncertainty that lies ahead under COVID-19, based on your experiences of serving an indeterminate prison sentence during the years of conflict? David, do you want to start?*

DAVID:

One of the things myself, and indeed a lot of guys, had to face was that there would be no end to this new regime. It actually was indeterminate. Fixed sentence men had what was called a date, and it was a fixed date that they could look forward to. Now, some had to look forward to nearly a decade. But for a number of guys, there was no end in sight. It was just a day-to-day. And as we stand here at the minute in April is that there is no end, there is no date when the lockdown or the social isolation is going to stop. And I lived my life like that for a long time. And what you’ve got to do is just make up your own—make up your own timeline. You don’t pin your hopes on it, but for example; I have planned this week, and I’ll get through this week, and I’ll worry about next week when that comes along.

MICHAEL:

I’m sort of very much in agreement with you. I mean, two weeks ago [LAUGHS], I started painting. I’m not very fond of painting in the house, and I had to actually slow down what I was doing, because I was going to get it finished as quick as I could and then I realised, this could be drawn out, this could be part of my new routine. So, on a personal level, I’ve developed a new routine in my 24 hour cycle, and painting is part of it. Now painting as in not artistry, painting as in windowsills and fences and stuff. So yeah, I’m with you there, fella. The main point that I would suggest to people is you have to find a reason for taking control, basically, as much as you can of your own life and your own routine. Own it. That's me.

DAVID:

Thanks. Thanks, Michael. The-- what I would say is change can be stressful. Change can be very challenging. But we face changes throughout our normal lives all the time. So, this is a change that's been put upon us and it's not very nice, but once again, we will adapt to that and overcome it. And days to come, we will look back on this. We will get through this.

MICHAEL:

Overcome. David, we shall overcome.

DAVID:

[LAUGHS] Yes, Michael.