



REST, RELAX & RESET: WORKING THROUGH A CRISIS

The innate skills of house sitters

by Andrew Redfern

Over the past few weeks, most house sitters have been thrown into chaos as sits have been cancelled and travel plans thwarted, and many of us have had to scramble to find a place to stay. However, as things begin to settle, being a house sitter is an advantage in the current climate as the world changes drastically daily or even hourly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our house sitting lives up to this point have, in a way, been preparing us for circumstances such as these. Our skills and approach to life can put us ahead of the game as we navigate uncharted territories. Our skill-sets and outlook can and will be a great asset.

What then are the characteristics of a house sitter that are useful in a crisis situation?

Adaptability

When house sitting, our lives change every few weeks or months, so we are used to adapting and adjusting to our new environs. Admittedly, we now may be in the same place for extended periods but as circumstances change around us, we have the ability (and experience) to adapt to this change and modify our lives accordingly.

Getting used to shopping differently or in a new supermarket is part of our regular lives so the current imposed restrictions are just part of our ever changing lives and we have the experience to roll with it.

Problem solving

Solving problems in new homes and locations is part of our every day, sometimes even in languages other than our native tongue. As things change regularly, employing our usual approach of gathering information, making an informed decision and then acting can be a great way to "weather the storm".

In fact, as we are essentially grounded, some of our more pressing problems have disappeared completely. Finding the cheapest way from A to B, or where we are going to stay when we don't have a sit, just aren't considerations now.

But in the same way we do our due diligence before accepting a sit, that skill can now be useful in determining our everyday lives as we consider a range of possibilities before taking informed action. And don't forget, this action can also include taking no action at all.

Resilience

The house sitting lifestyle has its ups and downs and we know that everything doesn't always go our way or to plan. This resilience, where we pick ourselves up again can help us through this difficult time.

We have an understanding that this won't last forever so if we just hang in there, our lives will no doubt return to some semblance of normality. The concept of a "Plan B" (or even "Plan C") is not uncommon, as we are used to uncertainty. Just as if we are on a less than desirable sit, we know that unpleasantness will pass and we can endure uncomfortable times – for a while at least.

Technical knowledge

As many grapple with Zoom and setting up home offices, for us, communicating digitally is our norm. In fact, online is usually our preferred mode of operation. We are familiar with bandwidth requirements and (usually) understand gigabits and megabits. Really, there is no transition for us, when the rest of the world is catching up to our way of doing things.

In fact, we can even be a resource and help others who may be struggling. Embrace your geekiness!

Opportunist

As house sitters, we never know where our life may take us or where our next house sitting gig may come from. This change in plans is another chance to seize opportunities, whether that be reconnecting physically with family, sorting out the storage space, or in our case, taking the chance to do some renovations on our rental apartment.

Do you have paperwork or business affairs you've wanted to get in order, or a book you've always wanted to write – now is the time. Carpe Diem!

Appreciate downtime

One benefit of the current situation, now we are settled, is that we can take advantage of the downtime and reset our lives. Perhaps we will have time to finally learn that new skill, take up a new hobby or even get our blog posts up to date.

As we currently don't have to constantly be on our devices looking for and applying for our next sits, we can enjoy an afternoon nap, partake in regular cocktail hours, do an extra long yoga practice, read a book, or whatever it is that allows us to fully relax.

A house sitters routine often already includes these activities, sometimes regarded as luxury pursuits. Now they are becoming the norm and reality of almost everyone.

Community driven

One thing that new house sitters soon discover is the wonderful community that exists around this lifestyle. Connecting online with others is a key component of that. This means we already have a network of people to talk to, ask questions of, and even video chat with to keep grounded.



We understand the importance of connection and in these times of social distancing there are still things we can do to build our communities, both physical and virtual. Inventive ways of connecting such as virtual lunches and online trivia games show we are determined to not be isolated.

As we settle in to new physical communities we can also be a support network to each other and those around us. An elderly neighbour may need some shopping done, a person working from home may appreciate their pet being walked, or even sharing your experiences with an anxious friend can all be extremely useful to those in times of need.

And don't forget the homeowners we have already sat for and those we will hopefully sit for in the future. Maintaining communication with owners is an important part of community building. Our experience has been that owners who have had to cancel are still keen for us to sit for them in the future. As we have already established international connections, it is also a good way to find out what is happening "on the ground" in various countries around the world.

It has been very heartening to receive emails from owners, past and future who are keen to know what we are doing and how we are adjusting to a new normal. Even some of our social media followers have reached out to find out what full time international travellers do in times like these.

Minimalist by nature

Living with only a few of life's luxuries is part of the house sitting lifestyle, so there may be no transition required to continue this minimalist way of living. As we see people panic buying and hoarding, our experience has shown us that we only need to buy what is necessary and we can make do with what we have.

For those of us who live out of our suitcases, we have all the clothes we need anyhow and can put down roots wherever required – not much has changed. Admittedly we may have the additional expense of rent but we no longer have travel costs or accommodation expenses between sits. Our eating out expenses will also be curtailed as we eat more simple meals at home, including finding creative ways to use leftovers – meat fritters anyone?

A changing world

I think we all recognise that the world has changed and house sitting in the future may be a little different. During our house sitting lives we have loved the possibility of adventure and change so the coming months and years will be no different.

The **Chinese meaning for the word crisis** is "danger at a point of juncture." So whilst we live in challenging times, it also indicates that it is a turning point. Hopefully that will ultimately mean positive changes for our world. As house sitters we are well positioned to contribute to this positive change.

So rest, relax, reset and as we emerge from the crisis in the months ahead may we embrace the opportunities that will no doubt come our way. As house sitters we are well positioned to

navigate these changes and use them constructively to hopefully bring about greater world peace and harmony.

You've got this – hang in there!

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author bio

Andrew & Christopher, known as Global Wanderers have been adventure travelling together since 2004 and house sitting full time internationally since 2016. You can keep up with their adventures at their website, GlobalWanderers.com or via Facebook and Instagram @globalwanderersoz

