



Cabin Fever

Circumstances change all the time. Looking back it's interesting to see how we've had to adapt with each lockdown. What a journey it's been, learning to adjust to a new way of life with constant changing government rules and long periods of time unable to see loved ones. A positive thread throughout the year has been the chance to slow down, to be able to step back from the busyness of life and clearly see the needs of my family. A year I won't forget, for good reasons as well as for being challenging. Recognising and understanding our individual needs has been really important and a key factor in working together as a family. It has meant that we have had to learn to put one another first and find out what was right in each situation.



The first lockdown wasn't too difficult once we had settled into a routine and was helped by having the most amazing spring and summer. We found it provided an amazing opportunity to deepen relationships within our family. Niggles or unusually difficult behaviour were highlighted enormously. Being in such close quarters meant if wrong attitudes weren't dealt with, they quickly became hard to ignore and affected the whole family. It also became obvious that we each needed our own space at different times. The children were able to burn off energy on long bike rides, swimming at the beach or playing in the garden. We were able to remove ourselves from the home environment and get some much-needed space. I had to learn as a mum to trust and start letting go. All three children have moved into a different, more grown-up phase and my son regularly needed the freedom to go out on his scooter and be by himself.

For the two girls it was different. Reluctant to let them go off individually, we compromised and allowed short trips to the shops together providing they took a phone and answered when I called (which I did regularly)! It gave them a little bit of independence and space, but it also changed and deepened their relationship. A wonderful result of time spent together meant they went from sisters who get on well, to being really good friends who are also sisters. They're still typical siblings who get irritable with each other, but their relationship is solid and built on a good friendship.

This recent lockdown has felt different and restrictive. Winter weather and short days combined with intensive 'live learning' has meant that activities in our free time have become more limited. We're all bored of walks and have felt a little bit of 'cabin fever'. Becoming aware that my easy-going eldest daughter had been rather snippy was an indication that she needed something different in her days. Options being limited, her dad took her to an old unused airfield and started teaching her to drive. Each week they have an hour together and she is back to her usual good-natured self. It gives her value and her place as the oldest child. Time with their Dad has been as important as space to all three children. It doesn't have to be a driving lesson and it could be as simple as working together to clean the car. The important bit was recognising that something was needed and then slowing down enough to hear what the Lord was saying in it all. Throughout these times I have constantly been reminded of God's goodness, his provision and desire to bless. My husband does not like to be indoors for very long and his favourite activity is chopping wood. Every year in February he and a friend coppice a farm but before Christmas a temporary new source of wood became available locally – such perfect timing coinciding with lockdown. A physical activity outdoors that he loves which also gives him his much-needed space.



We don't always know what the best thing is for someone, but the Lord does. We can trust his Spirit will guide us as we learn to slow down and hear the quiet voice within.

Kelly Sparkes