

Lockdown Story 8 (Simon Todd, a Barbers tale)

At 2.30pm Saturday 21 March 2020 I began, what would become my last haircut for 15 weeks.

The rumours had been spreading for a while that we would soon be going into lockdown. Even at that late stage there were still a few of my customers who didn't believe it would happen.

Then on Monday 23rd the Prime Minister made the announcement and set out the rules and regulations concerning the lockdown. From that moment, my business and countless others were closed, we were told for 3 weeks.

As it happens, I own the building where my business is located, so I qualified for the governments "Small business rates relief grant". This meant that by the end of the second week of lockdown, the government transferred £10,000 into my business account. It was then that I knew, this lockdown for me was going to be much longer than 3 weeks.

This current government have been criticised for many things over the past 9 months and in a lot of respects, quite rightly so! However, the financial help that I received from them at that time, allowed me to keep a roof over my family's heads, to pay bills and put food on the table. We had to be careful with the money and make it last until I could return to work, but it took away a lot of stress and pressure. I will always be grateful for that.

As a family, the biggest lesson we took away from the first lockdown was, we actually don't need much... stuff! When you haven't got money to throw around and you can't go anywhere, your focus shifts to the things that really matter.

Our lockdown days were filled with, movies, reading, dog walks, workouts, FaceTime calls and general "family time". The children did have school work, which we also did together. I grew to really enjoy my time away from work and I can honestly say if I hadn't needed to go back to work, I wouldn't have!

I eventually reopened at the beginning of July and for the first few weeks I was run off my feet. By August things had calmed down and I began to notice appointments here and there that hadn't been taken. This was very strange! After being closed for so long, I had expected to return to a pre-lockdown situation. After a time, I realised the gaps, were from customers who, were suffering with virus or who, were too afraid to go out in public. This quieter period continued until October and brought with it a lot of financial instability. Things appeared to be returning to normal, then they announced the second lockdown!

I closed my doors again, 8.00pm Wednesday 4 November and as I sit writing this Sunday 29th November I still have not been able to apply for any financial assistance from the government. We have managed to get by, using our savings, our overdraft and a little kindness from family members. With my eldest daughter away at Chester University and my two younger children at school, this second lockdown has been completely different and I welcome the return to work later this week.

I still however, regard our situation as being blessed, in spite of financial worries. The fact that we were given so much quality time together, time we will never get again (at least not until lockdown part 3). We were also one of the lucky families that haven't been seriously affected by this deadly virus.

COVID-19 has turned this whole world upside down and forced us all to pause and reflect... and maybe, that's not such a bad thing. It's easy to get carried away with the material and consumer driven lifestyle, especially with the influence and pressure from social media. But all of that is an illusion, none of it is real. As long as we have love in our life, faith in our hearts and people we can call our own, we don't need anything else. Stay safe and god bless

Simon Todd

Owner and manager of Boz Barbers