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How my studies, meditation, coaching and lipstick helped me to successfully cope with my job loss during COVID-19.

Stress mastery at its finest: how I lost my job in the middle of a worldwide health crisis, wrangled my tears and took control by empowering myself with daily meditation, lipstick and yoga pants. I studied and worked hard to set up my own Business and Personal Coaching company: Iris – Your Transformational Coach.

Monday morning, 24 February 2020: I had just arrived for a meeting I had set up with my boss to update him on the 2023 category strategy I was working on. We sat down, I began connecting my laptop and advised him of my agenda for our meeting. He interrupted me right there, stating that he needed to discuss something important with me. His tone and expression appeared somewhat serious, so I stopped what I was doing and listened.

A mere 45 minutes later, I had not only left the meeting room but also the building. It quickly hit me that tomorrow's scheduled follow-up meeting was to process my redundancy. I was a casualty of COVID-19's impact on the business.

I remember driving home in shock thinking how almost comical this situation was. It was just five days before my leap-year birthday and COVID-19 was emerging as a worldwide crisis. Happy birthday to me.

Luckily, I already had birthday plans and that, along with my desire to begin a new career as a Business and Personal Coach, gave me something to focus on and kept me going during that first week. Realistically, I knew there would be no full-time jobs available over the next few months that required my marketing expertise. However, within this crisis I could see opportunities opening up, which gave me hope and drive at the same time.

Additionally, thanks to modern technology, I was still able to connect with my family and friends around Australia and the world. They rallied around me with these encouraging words, "you are the strongest person I know and can get through this". This and the resilience that I developed over the years constructing my life in parts of Europe, the United States of America, Senegal and China, helped me to reset and focus my energy on the positives. I suddenly had time to study – something I had started in November 2019 and had wanted to continue in April after my planned trip to Europe.

While I can look back on that time in a positive light now, I admit there were dark moments. I wondered what was wrong with me: why did I have to lose my job and not my colleague? Terrible thoughts I know, but they were there.

In between, I was angry and scared at the same time. I worried about my family in Europe, the fact that I could not see my dad for his 80th birthday in March and that the virus might affect someone I love or even myself. There was a lot going on and the uncertainty felt enormous. In this, I am sure I was not alone and there are many people who can relate.

Back in February, when my life changed so dramatically, I made a conscious decision to utilise my stress as a positive force for growth. I then made myself accountable for this decision by telling all my friends (at my birthday gathering nonetheless). I took control of my situation.

Like talking to a stubborn horse, I reminded myself daily to stay extremely focused. Stress affects us mentally and physically. So, I strengthened my mind and body with a healthy plant-based diet, long walks and daily yoga and meditation. Did I still cry, feel anxious, or freak out at times? Hell yes! But I put on my confidence armour (in the form of bright lipstick) and kept moving forward. I was so lucky to have been coached myself, which made a huge difference – another source to hold me accountable for achieving my goals in conjunction with my own determination.

I have learned so much over the last few months about myself: how to recognise triggers of stress and how to best support myself with energy management. This translates to knowing how I can best support and coach another person, what it means to be my client's partner and the value that coaching and positive psychology can bring to anybody. I became a Business and Personal Coach with an accreditation from the International Coaching Federation (ICF) – something that I had been dreaming of for a long time. I feel like I emerged from the crisis as an upgraded version of myself.

Supporting others is another wonderful boost to our wellbeing that we bring to our own lives. In helping myself and achieving my dream, I was able to give back by coaching and supporting others who were affected by the crisis; people who had lost work or clients and, equally, those who were struggling with the mental strain of isolation.

Looking back now – a degree in my hand, the founding of my coaching company I-YTC Ltd Pty., my website up and running, and training and coaching experience behind me – it all feels like a wild, exciting and rewarding ride.

If you would like to find out more about my passion for life and coaching, my qualifications, how I work and how coaching might benefit you, please visit my website and contact me if you have further questions. I am also available for an interview.

I am happy for you to share my story as I hope to inspire other people with the knowledge that we can all get through a difficult situation by slowly shifting our energy and transforming. Let *me* help you get there.

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