Questions for Rowenna

I've been on a lot of chats with mates who are really struggling because they spend so much time climbing and are feeling lost, uncertain, all at sea, guilty, fat, demotivated, lonely etc). A section on mental heath in relation to climbing is really important to me as I've been there when it comes to time away from climbing and I'm keen to get across as much useful information as possible.

Firstly, can you give a brief overview of Cognitive Hypnotherapy, what it entails and how it can be useful for helping the mind of the climber?

"***I need to climb!***". I've heard/seen/read this a lot the past few weeks. For many people, unless they have experienced time-out with injury, this will be the first time that they have been prevented from doing what they love (or indeed "need"). Climbing is an addiction of sorts - a healthy one in many ways but, unhealthy too if you allow it to control your mood. Can you offer some thoughts on how best to manage healthy addictions and those times when you are unable to get your regular fix.

Let's talk a bit about exercise and mental health. It is well-documented (and indeed mentioned on a daily basis during the Covid news reports) that exercise promotes not only better physical health but it also contributes to improved mental health. Without the outlet to the form of excerise that you normally enjoy on a regular basis levels of anxiety will be rising which has a detrimental affect on your health. Can you talk a little bit about managing anxiety during uncertainty and why/how developing this can be a useful tool for climbing performance?

Following on from this part of the problem with uncertainty is that many of us are feeling, for various reasons, like we don't have any control over our lives. Let's consider how people's thoughts can spiral out of control when they themselves are feeling like they don't have control. Can you expand on the concept of "catastrophising" (and in relation to climbing).

Increased levels of depression/a downward shift in your mood can lead to you feeling very demotivated and this can then become an ever decreasing spiral if you don't check it proactively. Can you offer some tips on staying motivated and about being kind to yourself/slowing down/finding a way to get started/acknowledging negative chatter but overcoming it etc. even if it means you just start small.

Many of us use climbing as a way of "achieving". And many of us will be experiencing anxiety that we might not be able to achieve goals set for the year or experiencing a shift in mood because we aren't achiveing much at all right now. If unchecked, when you are feeling vulnerable this can spiral into an existential crisis about life in general. Can you offer some tips about reprogamming that kind of addictive behaviour/negative chat. Reframining and focussing on long term goals perhaps, making a plan for short term goals, accepting etc.

Let's talk about the word "*should*". I think this is particularly relevant when considering how we look at achieving. "Should" opens up a gateway to guilt which leads to negative thought patterns. I

should be training otherwise I will be crap. Am I training enough? Should I be training everyday? Etc etc. Some of us will have lots of time on our hands to train, others won't and will be adjusting to new routines, having to work from home and homeschool their kids. How can you reprogramme your brain to stop the conditional tense inveigling your thoughts?

When you are on a roll with climbing, it can be quite fast-paced, climbing 5 or 6 times a week, lots of weekend trips, lots of holidays booked, lots of goals planned, training, climbing climbing climbing. We are being told at the moment to take the time to slow down, take the foot of the gas etc. What does slowing down mean, particularly in relation to climbing and do you have some tips for adjusting to new patterns/routines, dialling-back and being ok with setting different smaller goals?

Let's look at a different side of guilt and resentment. A lot of folk will be finding they are busier than ever - having to juggle work/childcare/schooling/shopping queues/possibly looking after friends/family etc and they actually won't have much time to train and will likely be feeling stressed about that - partly through guilt that they should be (apparently - as everyone else is, right?!). For many people climbing offers an escape and can't tap into that vital lifeline at the moment. Can you offer some tips for coping with stress when you can't get to your outlet your normally use.

Let's also consider guilt people may be feeling that they are worrying about climbing when there's bigger things happening. Can you offer some ways that people can gain perspective without beating themselves up.

Social media is currently a lifeline for many or rather most of us to help us feel connected not only to friends but to the outside world in general when we can't interact with it as much as normal. It is, however, something of a double-edged sword with algorithms quick to pounce on anything we may click on so that they can hurl a bunch of other similar things at us. Most if not all of us are guilty of plugging into our phones and absentmindely scrolling. It's easy to end up in a rabbit hole and come out the other side feeling rather rubbish having been bomabrded by images of people training, nailing one-armers etc and the countless fitness videos by hotties with shredded abs etc. There is a danger here for this to feed negatitivty to vulnerable unsettled minds. Now more than ever in these uncertain times this is a suboptimal place to end-up because moods are particularly fragile. Perhaps you could talk a little bit comparison of self with others and how not to beat yourself up. It's human nature to compare ourselves – it happens across the board, not just in climbing. What tips can you offer for taking time to try reprogram that and learn some tools for life for for our future times in climbing.

When we experience a major shift in routine sleep can often be disrupted. Stress and anxiety also affect sleep patterns, as will a sudden change in your physical routine – you simply aren't tiring yourself out as much. Can you offer some advice on how to cope with disrupted sleep patterns.

Humans are social animals (in the main) and climbing is very much a social hub for many of us, it provides a community; a tribe. Can you talk a bit about how to handle disruption to your social network and offer some tips for coping with isolation from your social hub, particularly for an indefinite amount of time.

I think it's important to recognise that some days you will feel better than others. Can you offer some tips on how to manage the times when a bad day parachuttes in?

Are there any other useful websites/podcasts etc that you would recommend?

Also, please can you answer these:

- Weirdest thing you have done during ISO/Lockdown.
- What else is on your Covid to do list, apart from training?
- Most surprising thing you have discovered during ISO/Lockdown
- Best climbing film/video recommendation.
- The first place you are going to climb (or go to) when you can.