

### Contents

Editorial	2
Acknowledgements	3
James' Story	4
"The Maharees"	6
Poem by Tao Porchon-Lynch	7
Local Mental Health Forum	8
Just for Today	9
A Tribute to Rose O'Shea	10
Rape Crisis Centre	12
Limerick Citizens Information	13
My Travels in France	14
Advice from MABS	15
A Tip from James	16
Vertigo	16
Grow Testimony	17
My COVID Experience	18
Sugar Free Tea Brack	21
A Wag a Day—Rua	22
Review of Patrick's Day	23
Stigma	24
The Mountain	25
A Virtual Thanks	26
News from the Midwest	27
Grow Group Information	28

Interspersed with Sayings by Denis and  
Limericks by Rob

### THE GROW JOURNEY



[www.grow.ie](http://www.grow.ie)

### Who we are

We are a community of people drawn together by our first-hand experiences of mental health problems. Having found practical ways of helping each other recover from mental health challenges we developed what we refer to as The Grow Program. We meet weekly in locations all over Ireland and use our proven 12 Step Program to recover from various forms of mental health problems.

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*On the LUAS and the bus  
Some people do make a  
fuss  
It's a simple task  
To put on a mask  
They are not superfluous.  
Rob*

*"We learned to think  
by reason rather than  
by feelings and  
imagination."  
Grow Program*

## My Covid Experience - Mary Purcell

On the morning of November 14th, 2020, when I called my 17 year old daughter for school, she uttered the words, we have all been hoping to avoid hearing these past few months "Mam, I think I have Covid". She had a sore throat, a temperature, slight cough and a feeling that "someone was sitting on her bones". My husband had left for work in Newcastle West and my son had left to work with my brother, doing agricultural building.

I rang the doctor's office, where they were very calm, professional and knowledgeable. They talked me through my daughter's symptoms and checked if any of the rest of us had symptoms and what our work involved. The other three of us had symptoms, that in pre Covid times, we would hardly even notice..slight dry throat, slight cough, a bit extra tired.

The advice was that we were all to isolate and we would all be tested. My husband was working in an office by himself, where he may be handing documents to another person but would not be meeting anyone face to face for any length of time...the advice was he needed to come home immediately!

My son, was working out in the open, with my brother, and no one else, but as they had travelled to work together in a jeep, they both needed to come home and isolate until we had our tests results.

I was working from home with Grow, so was able to continue.

I notified my daughter's school and we awaited the text for the test appointment. As directed by our GP, I gave my daughter paracetamol.

Even in those first few hours, I found myself reverting to the Grow Program:

"We learned to think by reason rather than by feelings and imagination" – I didn't need to panic at this point, stick with the facts, we had some symptoms, we were having a test, we were fine.

"Follow sound advice. Believe what your trusted friends and professional tell you".

We got the text later that day, we were all to be tested the following morning in Limerick, all within five minutes of each other.

My son also got another call to say he was a close contact of a confirmed case and needed to be tested...we were able to cancel that test as he was coming with us for the "family test". Bob (my son) had gone back hurling training, as allowed, and possibly picked up the virus there.

We went off for our test in the ground of St. Joseph's Hospital (Test Centre since closed) the following morning. We were met by the loveliest of people there, the guy who was directing traffic, had a smile and a word for everyone. A lovely young Army lad did our test and was first class, a credit to himself, his family and his country. The test itself is momentarily unpleasant (we did not find it painful). I guess we are all proud of our own children but I was particularly proud of our two, when I heard them thank the young Army man and express their appreciation for the work they were doing...

**COVID-19** is an illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It's caused by a virus called coronavirus.

For more information, visit the HSE website:

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

*For some quite a big task*

*To wear a simple mask?*

*Just use the head  
Reduce the spread*

*Is it too much we ask?*

Rob

We spent a lovely weekend together as a family, awaiting our results. We were lucky, we weren't really sick, mild flu like symptoms and tiredness. On the Sunday, we were eating our dinner, when I noticed I couldn't taste anything. Asked the folks and they realised they couldn't either and our smell was gone. Strange to be eating food and not able to taste any of it (our appetites were not at all affected!!! That remained very healthy throughout!!). We were somewhat confident until then that we didn't have the virus, but our thinking shifted then and to be honest a little bit of fear/anxiety started to creep in to me...had to remind myself "Don't be an emotional reaction, be a person". My husband is incredibly calm and easy going (annoyingly so sometimes!!) so he certainly helped to allay my fears that weekend (always good to share our concerns with a trusted friend).

We got our results on Monday morning and all four of us tested positive, we were a bit shocked but again the advice and support of the medical people was very reassuring. We were asked to make a list of our close contacts, which fortunately were very few. We were told which symptoms might develop and what to do if they did (very few of them did) and we were told to:

- ◆ Isolate.
- ◆ Get loads of rest.
- ◆ Take loads of fluids.
- ◆ Bulk up on Vitamin C and D.
- ◆ Take paracetamol if needed.
- ◆ Contact our GP or the Emergency services if we developed any breathing difficulties or any other symptoms.

We contacted Amey's school, a number of her classmates had to go home and be tested. Amey found that information a bit of a burden initially as she felt "responsible", but thankfully as Amey, her classmates, her teachers and the school community were vigilant around:

- ◆ Hand washing
- ◆ Mask wearing
- ◆ Social Distancing
- ◆ Not exchanging books, pens etc.,

None of her classmates or teachers tested positive and to date she retains the title of being the only confirmed case in the school!! and the gratitude of her friends for securing them a few extra days off (don't know if their parents hold these views).

We had two to three weeks before we were back to full strength, the fatigue being the toughest symptom to manage. We just had to accept that our bodies needed rest and go with that. We did short walks around our own yard but didn't venture out too much as we have neighbours who have underlying health issues. We all had different symptoms, Amey had the temp and the aches and pains, Bob had chest tightness, Paul had aches and pains and I had leg pain...and we were all very, very tired.

“May the spirit of friendship make us free and whole persons and gentle builders of a free and whole community.”

Grow Program



Eric Hanley (RIP 2020) with Rob Stephen at a Cycle Against Suicide Event in 2014. Eric, a real gentleman, was a great advocate for Grow and he regularly volunteered to help out at various events.

“A friend is as far as the nearest phone.”

Grow Program

## My Covid Experience (cont'd)

### What did we learn during our time of isolation?

We could live together as a family, 24/7 for over two weeks and get on really well... most of the time!! We appreciated each other in ways we may not have done before.

We have really supportive families, who when we needed them, rallied around us. Not everyone is fortunate enough to have that I know, but when we have, we ought to practice and express gratitude for them

Neighbours, Friends and local Community were superb, the offers to shop, cook, collect and deliver for us were humbling.

We discovered the absolute joy of online grocery shopping and as we were able to check the offers section and add in or delete items easily, we think we might have saved money! The shopping was left at our door the next day (as someone who detests the drudgery of grocery shopping, I am almost converted) by a lovely, friendly guy, who chatted through the window with us.

Young people are really very good decent human beings, our children's friends were so kind, my daughters really close friends, delivered “care packages” to our gate, full of lovely treats, really thoughtful gifts and lovely cards, with sweet messages.

The Grow Community, Staff, members and Volunteers were so supportive with calls and texts “A friend is as far as the nearest phone”

It is ok to not be ok, and there were days when the thoughts in my head were not always healthy, worry would creep in, I worried, particularly for Amey, if she ended up in hospital and we couldn't be with her. In those times and days, I again sought reassurance in the Grow program, “Feelings are not facts”, “I am more durable than vulnerable”, “Tiredness is only tiredness”, “Emphasise what is rather than what isn't”.

We survived, we didn't end up really sick, in hospital or worse and for that we are eternally grateful, every day I think of and send positive thoughts and wishes to each person who is diagnosed with Covid, wishing them a speedy return to good health. I pray (in my own way) for those who are in hospital, those alone and their families who so much want to be with them and those who have lost their lives and left loved ones grieving. Covid has taught me to be grateful for all that I have, mainly my health and that of those I love.

My wish for each of you is that you stay well during this time in body, mind and spirit. I urge you to stay connected, however you can do that, make a phone call, send a text, join the Zoom call, write a letter, even though we have to stay apart don't stay alone. Stay as healthy as you can, eat well, drink fluids, get fresh air, get rest, develop a hobby, practice gratitude.

And may the spirit of friendship make us free and whole persons and gentle builders of a free and whole community. **Mary Purcell, Regional Manager**

“If the rough road gets you there and the smooth one doesn’t, which one will you take?”

Grow Program

### Our Values

Inclusion

Integrity

Connection

Support

Change

## Grow Group Information

Groups are being run on Zoom for the foreseeable future due to COVID-19 restrictions. Existing Grow members should contact the Area Co-ordinators for Zoom links for the meetings listed below, which are subject to change. For information on reopening of face to face meetings please refer to Grow Website, [www.grow.ie](http://www.grow.ie) for further updates.

- Monday, 7:30 pm, Ennis Group.
- Tuesday, 11:00 am, Hospital and Newcastle West Groups combined.
- Tuesday, 7:30 pm, Nenagh Group.
- Wednesday, 11:00 am, Limerick Group.
- Wednesday, 7:30 pm, Limerick Group.
- Thursday, 7:30 pm, Limerick Group.
- Friday, 10:30 am, Croom Group.

There are currently 16 new online groups around the country. Those who wish to find out more about Grow or to join an online group can do so by either: -

- Completing the online form <https://grow.ie/how-do-i-join/>
- Emailing [online@grow.ie](mailto:online@grow.ie) or
- Phoning the information line: 1890 474 474

Grow also currently facilitate regular introductory groups for patients in the acute units in Limerick and Ennis Hospitals.

### Our Mission

To create new hope, sense of identity, meaning and valued connections by empowering people to nurture their own positive mental health and well-being, by supporting personal growth and establishing a path to recovery with education, self-teaching and peer support.

