

# CHRISTINE SAUNDERS

Creative Consultant & Coach to Photographers & Illustrators

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16 tips, questions, advice and resources on how to survive and thrive during and after lockdown.

*Stay healthy, stay positive, stay inspired, stay busy, and stay connected with your community - close to home and globally.*

- Practice self care

We have all experienced some level of trauma during this pandemic, but it is incumbent on each of us to practice self-care so we not only survive, but thrive now and in the future. This may sound obvious but we often neglect to take good care of ourselves. Are you looking after yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally? Think about your diet and how it might be a bit healthier for you. Invest time in an exercise regimen: perhaps a daily dose of Joe Wicks with your kids or a longer walk with your dog. How about looking into yoga or meditation? When the homeschooling with my 12-year-old daughter gets a bit much, I often turn to the mindfulness/meditation app *Calm*.

- Empower your website

Look at this as the perfect opportunity to make your best website ever. Rather than chasing after the next piece of paid work, use some of this downtime to rethink everything about your online shop window. Does your website truly show your best work, or is it a bit of everything to cover all the bases? If you could do a complete start-over, what would your ideal website look like? How could it be the best possible representation of you for someone who has never seen your work? And don't forget, less is sometimes more (just think of all those dense websites you've tried to wade through yourself).

- Use social media to engage with clients and prospects

It's difficult to be too active on social media, so feel free to go crazy. Creatives have more time than ever to view your work so keep in touch and inspire them. With previous and prospective clients also at home, it is a great time to update them with new work they haven't seen, or a personal project that is keeping you busy during lockdown. Feed them interesting stuff. Show them how you view the world. Remind them of your own unique perspective. Make them think about you.

- Explore at least one new platform

Push the boundaries of your own comfort zone. Look beyond what you have got used to and learn about some new avenues to market. Think about how you could use email differently. *Facebook, LinkedIn* and *Instagram* are great, but what about *YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, Ello, Fstoppers, Behance, Visura, Flickr, YouPic*? Your online presence is all you have right now, so you may as well

come out with all guns blazing. Make sure you're posting something somewhere every single day (even weekends). Don't make yourself hard to find.

- Assure clients you're ready to work

Have you thought through all the necessary safety protocols that you'll need to follow at this time? You need a plan not only for what these are, but how they will impact any crew or clients, and what it will mean for the job. Do you need to get some of your own PPE (masks for everyone at the shoot, a gazillion antiseptic wipes, extra hand sanitizer, etc)? What additional precautions will you be taking when it comes to cleaning equipment and props? Should you be arranging for people to have their temperatures taken on set? Will you need additional time - possibly even an allowance for quarantine if the work takes you abroad - and how will that factor into planning and costing the assignment?

- Keep in touch with clients regardless

Don't stop contacting previous or prospective clients. In fact, do it more than ever. Send them some of your images that will cheer creatives up in this time. You don't have to try and guess what the brief is, just let them see something that is meaningful to you. Remind them that you exist. Remember that they are finding this ordeal just as perplexing as you are. Try to connect with them as people, rather behaving like someone who has something to sell. Visual material is emotive. Think about how you can use your talents to inspire them and raise their spirits, and they may remember you more easily when all this is through.

- Do you have any special tricks up your sleeve?

Do you have a home studio that will make the logistics of a shoot at this time so much easier to handle? Do you work with any models who are able to do their own hair and make-up? Do you have a track record of working with a very limited crew (or none at all)? Think of what you already know and how you already work and package this to clients to show how you're really prepared to keep working during this crisis.

- Don't be let down by the basics

If you're not comfortable with *Zoom*, then get used to it quickly. Practice doing calls with friends and family. Do the same with *Skype*, *Bluejeans*, *Hangouts*, *Chime*, even *Messenger* and *Facetime*. Be ready to use any platform the client wants and have the software already downloaded. Understand how to schedule a meeting, share your screen, use your computer's audio and video, mute your microphone and anything else you'd need to do to come across as totally professional. Make sure you are as prepared as you can be, especially for anything to do with the crisis that may impact the planning (including keeping on top of latest developments with any relevant authorities).

- Don't stop shooting

Just because there aren't many commissions around right now, doesn't mean you should be on holiday. Look into what you could be shooting right now. Could you be doing simple landscape or documentary/street photography? How about porch photographs and personal portraits? Is there another way to capture the spirit of these times in your own style? Check out some of these

photographers who have continued shooting safely throughout lockdown and see if it gives you any ideas:

[www.nickturpin.com](http://www.nickturpin.com); <https://carolinewhitephotography.com>;

photographer@chris maggio (insta) [www.cargocollective.com](http://www.cargocollective.com); [www.chris-frazersmith.co.uk](http://www.chris-frazersmith.co.uk)

There is a great article in *The Guardian/Observer Online* by Killian Fox, Tini Lewis and Lisa O'Kelly from Sun 10th May 2020, in which eleven photographers capture their confinement and reflect on their experience since the outbreak.

- Think what you can do not what you can't

How can you adapt your way of working to a new way of working? Do you have other skills that you can bring to bear on your work, or are there opportunities to partner with others to deliver something neither of you could do alone? If you're an illustrator, are you making the most of the fact that there are no safety or distancing issues impacting your ability to work? Artists that specialise in CGI or super photorealistic style should be out on the front-foot prospecting with clients who think they have to put everything on pause because photography is hard to undertake during this crisis.

- Is there an initiative you can invent or invest in?

Below are three examples of innovative ideas from artists and photographers that have arisen during this crisis. Could you become involved in something like this?

*#Artist Support Pledge*

A cause set up by Sussex artist Mathew Burrows which is offering a self-sustaining lifeline to an ever-expanding number of fellow artists across the world. Artists post their work for £200 or less on Instagram using the hashtag #ArtistSupportPledge. When an artist makes £1,000 in sales, they pledge to plough back £200 pounds on purchasing the work from another artist using the hashtag.

#### *Postcards from quarantine*

This is a collection of photos and text curated by Eva Marcelle received during COVID-19 from photographers around the world on Instagram@evamarcelle

#### *Self Publish, Be Happy*

This is the brainchild of photographer Bruno Ceschel. He had the idea of showcasing new titles from books by long established artists to teenagers, and has produced a sell out series of online masterclasses focusing on photobooks during the COVID-19 crisis.

- Have you explored online learning?

There are loads of opportunities to learn new skills or polish existing ones online. How can you use this time to improve yourself? Can't see anything out there that grabs your interest? Then what could you create that you could teach to others? Running training courses can create not only a revenue stream, but it can be a great way to showcase your own talents without having

to try to market them. It can open up whole new audiences of potential clients and referrers.

- Can you create an online exhibition of your work?

This can be created within your website, but you may also want to consider

some of these platforms that specialise in online galleries: Artsteps

[www.artsteps.com](http://www.artsteps.com); Pixie Set [www.pixiset.com](http://www.pixiset.com); PASS [www.pass.com](http://www.pass.com);

SMUGMUG [www.smugmug.com](http://www.smugmug.com); Zenfolio [www.zenfolio.com](http://www.zenfolio.com); Photoshelter

[www.photoshelter.com](http://www.photoshelter.com)

- Find new inspiration

Make it a goal to uncover one new source of inspiration each week. Is there a book you've always wanted to read but never got around to? Or a movie you've been meaning to watch? Go hunting for interesting new talent that is out there, and take a fresh look at the emerging competition. Think about the artists you have already admired and find out what they've been doing lately. Call old friends. Take long walks. Discover a new genre of music that you've never really listened to. Wake all your Muses.

- Revamp your marketing tools

Do you have an agent, and is it the right one for you? How much online promotion are you doing? It may feel counter-intuitive with so much reining in of expenditure, but now is the best time to invest in yourself. There are many different resources to call upon.

Grammarly [www.grammarly.com](http://www.grammarly.com) can help you think about how you write. TinyPng [www.tinypng.com](http://www.tinypng.com) condenses the size of your images so that your website performance isn't compromised by being too slow. Semrush [www.semrush.com](http://www.semrush.com) optimises your content. Canva [www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com) has lots of free content to create templates. Later [www.later.com](http://www.later.com) can manage all your social media content.

There are many different marketing tools depending on your need and it's well worth digging around a little as many offer free plans or special introductory rates.

- Think about mentorship

Is there someone you can turn to for personal and professional advice who knows enough about your work to be knowledgeable, but who is sufficiently distanced from your career to be objective? Are there conversations you sometimes wish you could have, but can't because of the lack of the right person to have them with? I think most of us benefit from having someone to keep them focused, make them accountable and ensure they are moving in a positive direction for their career.

#### Additional Resources

- Do check out the following:

AOI, AOP, Creative Review, Boom, Its Nice That, The Fast Company, Design Taxi



- In particular, follow this link for specific guidance on working during COVID-19

<https://www.the-aop.org/coronavirus-guidance>

For further resources, visit my website [www.christine.saunders.co.uk](http://www.christine.saunders.co.uk) It's a constantly growing list, so please do email me if you would like to include examples or ideas that have helped you.

It is really important to keep a positive mindset and know that being prepared should help succeed in the new normal. Good luck and I am here to help if I can

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*And remember:*

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