



Four Nordic concepts to help you through Covid-19

Our lives have changed dramatically - maybe forever. We have had to adjust to many changes due to Covid. Our freedom to live our normal life is now restricted in one way or another. All this takes a very high emotional toll on us. I don't know about you, but I am exhausted!

I have been thinking about what to do to make the most out of this new (not) normal. What would Ordinary Nordic's do?

There are four fairly well known Nordic concepts that could be helpful for creating a calmer mindset for these turbulent times.

The first is **Finnish "SISU"**. One of the first things about SISU is that for me, as a Finn, this word is untranslatable. As far back as 1940, the New York Times wrote "It is not easily translated, because no other language has its precise equivalent." The headline read, "Sisu: A word that explains Finland."

The author Joanna Nylund describes SISU in her book [The Finnish Art of Courage](#). The concept of SISU goes back 500 years or more. It can refer to "stoic

determination, hardiness, courage, bravery, willpower, tenacity and resilience.” It’s “an action-oriented mindset.”

Finns don’t brag about having sisu, you just “let your actions do the talking.”

SISU comes from a Finnish root word that implies “inner” or “inside.” This is one reason it is sometimes translated as “guts” or “inner strength”. Every Finn can lay claim to SISU.

However, you don’t need to be a Finn to have SISU - everyone can have SISU. It lies within you. You just need to dig it out and make it work. You need to incorporate SISU-like attitudes into your own life to cope with these unprecedented challenging times. And one thing about us Finns - we never give up. I have tapped into SISU many, many times in my life. One of the first real challenges in my life was just after high school. I left my home village in Finland and flew to Israel to work in a Kibbutz for 6 months. It was very challenging on many levels to leave my cozy, safe rural environment. I entered a totally different culture where security was a real issue. I needed to dig deep with SISU to rapidly adapt to a dramatic change in my circumstances.

The second is **Swedish “LAGOM”** LAGOM is not only a margarine brand. What LAGOM really is, is a Swedish lifestyle philosophy - “Not too much, not too little. Just right.” LAGOM is a state of mind. It’s living in the moment - accepting and appreciating what you have. You don’t fill your life with unnecessary things. You practice self-restraint, meaning not over eating or drinking, not binge watching Netflix and not purchasing, extravagant things.

LAGOM is also a concept in Swedish society where everyone should have access to the same benefits and rights. LAGOM is a mindset that you can apply to your everyday life including work-life balance or taking time to get out of the city into nature. It’s a modest approach to life but leads to a higher, more sustainable way of living and a happier mindset. Live better with less. How can you practice LAGOM in your life? There is a great little booklet if you would like to learn more” [Lagom: The Swedish Art of Balanced Living](#)”.

Lets stay with the Swedes. Another great concept they have is “**FIKA**”. It is a little mini-break in a day. It often means having a coffee break with a cinnamon-bun: Kanelbulla in Swedish or Korvapuusti like we say in Finnish and socialising with friends.

You can FIKA on your own to give yourself a break and sit in a coffee shop and enjoy something nice to eat. The FIKA concept is an institution. It is also a great way to get into society. It can also be about meeting people and building your network in a nice cozy atmosphere with coffee and cake if you like.

It means different things to different people but it is a very important part of the Swedish lifestyle.

If you would like to learn how to FIKA and make some Swedish cinnamon buns and cakes instead of sourdough, check out this little book [Fika: The Art of The Swedish Coffee Break, with Recipes for Pastries, Breads, and Other Treats.](#)

By the way, a cinnamon bun is a must to have when you go to Stockholm or Helsinki. My favourite cafe in Helsinki is [Café Succès](#) and they serve these massive Korvapuusti. I wish I could have one now!

I am sure many of you have heard about the Danish word **HYGGE** - it is a word to acknowledge a special feeling or a moment. It is a way to develop well being and as the Danes say, it is a way of life. HYGGE is about feeling cosy, comfortable and content. To be hyggeligt is a feeling or moment, whether alone or with friends, at home or out, doing something ordinary or extraordinary. There are many ways to create HYGGE moments in your life. HYGGE like FIKA can mean different things to different people. You can't buy a 'hygge living room' and there are no 'hygge foods' to eat. It literally only requires consciousness, a certain slowness, and the ability to not just be present – but recognize and enjoy the present. For me, HYGGE is a simple act, like lighting a candle with a meal or buying flowers every Saturday morning after the house has been cleaned. It is a cozy brunch or lunch with closest girlfriends. Or reading a good book, listening to music and having a glass of wine. What would be your hygge moment?

[How to Hygge](#), by well known Danish cook and writer Signe Johansen, explores the culture of hygge, shares the secrets of Nordic living and shows you how to adopt these elements into your everyday life, wherever you are in the world.

All these four concepts are something we can all easily do. It's about a happier way of life and mind set. Stopping for a moment and being aware. I hope you can use these Nordic mindset concepts to help to deal with the present and the future. Be well and stay safe.