

Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby reflect on lockdown and working throughout the pandemic

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[Daytime](#)

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Phillip: “It’s made me appreciate work and friendship”

ITV’s flagship daytime show *This Morning* remained on air throughout the global pandemic and achieved its highest ratings in 19 years, with over 10 million viewers tuning in to the show during the first week of lockdown in 2020.

Following on from the next stage of lockdown easing yesterday, hosts Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby took a moment recently to reflect on the most challenging year in the show's 33 year history and how it has changed them.

Martin Frizell, Editor of This Morning said, “Phillip and Holly - together with our hard working crew - have quite frankly all been heroes in my eyes for their determination and positivity throughout the pandemic. They helped to deliver a live two-and-a-half-hour show each day throughout the whole of lockdown, when sometimes we didn’t even know what or how we could deliver a show some days!

“But together we have done it and I’m extremely proud that we were there every step of the way for the nation who were gripped for vital updates on Covid and the vaccine, but also for items that helped to keep spirits up and smile during this most extraordinary year.”

PHILLIP AND HOLLY QUOTES:

How do you think this year has changed you?

Phillip: “It’s made me appreciate work and friendship. It’s also made me appreciate the small things in life that when we can get them all back, I don’t think I’ll ever take them for granted again - the fact that I could actually get in my car and drive to see my mum, go and see mates or have mates round. Those simple, simple things. I’m not even fussed about vast international holidays and things like that, I just want to sit in my garden with some mates.”

Holly: “I agree. I think it’s those small things, those small liberties that you take for granted that you never thought that anybody would take away from you ever. You couldn’t even see that as a possibility. ‘How has that happened?’ which was exactly how we felt as it was happening. You know, that kind of panic and fear and, ‘God, what is this?’

“I’ve learnt so much and I hope a lot of the things that I’ve learnt will stay with me. It’s funny, because I can see it with the kids as well, I think all generations are going through it.”

What supported you most during this past year?

Holly: “The viewers. I think knowing what you were doing was being well received made all the difference, otherwise why else would you do it? We’ve been told by viewers we were like the nation’s comfort blanket, which is just amazing.”

Phillip: “And the viewers were our comfort blanket too! It’s the core things. I mean we’re lucky because of the job that we do with that extended family, so you have support from viewers and then you shrink down into what everybody had at that

time hopefully, you have either your friends or your family, and that was what we all suddenly needed the most. You needed someone to be there if you were struggling or they were struggling and you were there. It's the simple things in life, the fundamental support of friends and family. And then we were lucky to have the extended work colleagues that we could see, and beyond that, this enormous team or family of people who were going through it with us as well."

Do you feel proud about what you and the This Morning team have achieved during lockdown? What has been the highlight for you?

Holly: "I don't know how they've done it half the time actually, because I think in the beginning nobody knew what we were getting into really. We didn't know what one day to the other was going to look like, things were changing so quickly and you know, we had a whole office bustling with people and then day by day it was getting less and less and less. Then it was just the two of us, Martin [Frizell, Editor] was here and just a couple of people on camera, and we were all a little bit scared actually and so to be able to adapt and change whilst worrying about what was going on, worrying about their own families, what was going on at home. You know a lot of them are parents themselves and they would've been trying to balance that with homeschooling. There was a lot on everyone's plate at that time."

Phillip: "It's this sort of enormous shared experience and quite unique in telly terms. Certainly the way we chose to want to be there for our This Morning family, the viewers, was that we wouldn't be hysterical, we would want to report in a sensible way, give it time, no knee jerk reactions - hold on a second, let's just sit back and think about this. We're all still here, we're all okay, everything's alright, we'll be fine."

"And of course, that's not being glib and trite over the fact that over 128,000 people [in the UK] have lost their lives. Of course that's important, those families utterly devastated. But if there was something that was said, we would look at it in an analytical way, let's make sure we know that this is right before we take it any further, and I think that's been an enormous calming effect on people who've watched. Yes we've reported it, but I think we've been quite sensible, we've been quite calm, there hasn't been hysteria and we've also allowed ourselves to laugh senseless, because that's what you do when things like this happen."

"We'd go on air and Lorraine had finished, and it meant that because we were in the same studio unusually, we didn't get any lights, and our lights would be off until Lorraine went off air for four minutes of that commercial break between the

two shows. Our lights came on, cameras came on and that studio came to life, and we had nothing lined up! And we'd look at each other, and we'd look at the team on the floor, and look at our floor manager and look at the two or three camera people there on the floor, we'd all look at each other in that four minutes and that's when our earpieces burst into life, because they'd transferred the studio, and you think, 'Okay, we're about to broadcast for two and a half hours and we've got a rough idea of what it might be, but we'd look at each other and go, 'What the hell is this?' And then the music would start and off you'd go."

Holly: "I knew we were doing something important. I've got the kids at home, Dan wasn't going into the office so I was really the only one going in and out of that house and I was worried, because I was thinking that I've got a responsibility for my own children. Having said all of that, I knew what we were doing was important, important enough for me to kind of go, 'No, I know we're being safe at work. I know I'm going to come home and wash my hands and take my clothes off by the door and get in the shower and all those things', because I knew what we were doing was important so I wanted to keep doing it."

"It's built through trust and I think people tune in because at the beginning they were hungry for information anywhere, I think we just wanted as much knowledge about it, but then sometimes that knowledge became too much and you just went, 'I don't want to know any more, I can't know any more' but with us, we didn't notice that because people were staying with us because there was the right balance of knowing the information, trusting the information that we're getting and also knowing that there was more to it than that. There's going to be other things that we would be talking about and discussing, for you to get in touch with the show and tell us things that were going on in your lives. The balance that This Morning always brings, is that it has that perfect line between informative but also entertaining."

Phillip: "Also it's quite important to say, that's all well and good for the two of us, but the Editor of the show - I think what Martin [Frizell] has achieved, and also before this year of course - his stewardship and his leadership, holding us all together and making sure we were all okay. It's also absolutely fundamental that you've got the boss who's making sure you can make the best telly you possibly can, and at the same time making sure that you're not about to fall apart yourself."

"When Diana died in that tunnel and This Morning was on the next day, Richard and Judy held onto the nation's hands with dear Denise [Robertson] and had a big open phone in and got the absolute pulse of the nation - the feeling and the grief,

and weren't afraid to show the grief - that in a microcosm is what This Morning is and can be. And then you just explode that and do it for a year. I think you suddenly realise, that's exactly what we're here for, that's what we do.

"We all had remote cameras put into our homes, all of us. The full on kit. We had two afternoons of rehearsals with earpieces, cameras, with autocue, with monitors. All set up like a set. When I was ten, that would've just about sent me over the excitement edge. To sit watching the TV and have a full on studio set up by the side of me at the dining room table, just in case it was needed. So then to find it for real - a TV camera in your house, connected up, ready to go, earpiece on the table, I can jump in there at a moment's notice? Thankfully it's gone. It was an amazing moment when we all realised that actually I don't think we need this, we can take it down now."

What has made you laugh?

Holly: "Milking a horse! That's probably up there with making me laugh and making me feel sick in equal measure."

Phillip: "On one particular moment, there was someone that we were talking to over a Skype or a Zoom call - and it was quite a prominent person - and their phone was sitting by the side of the monitor, you couldn't see it, and at a very unfortunate moment the phone vibrated and the person had also just shifted sideways, and it sounded like the most extraordinary fart you've ever heard in your life on the telly! They couldn't cut back to either of us. Thankfully, that person was giving a long answer. It meant that mics were out - cut the mics - we were helpless with our hands on the desk screaming with laughter. This was in the darkest of times and we had to get ourselves together before they finished their answer."

What else have you been grateful for on the show this year?

Phillip: "We were so lucky to have had a bar and a Guinness on the show!"

Holly: "So lucky and also, practically being in a restaurant every day - we get food cooked and plonked in front of us."

Phillip: "When a Spin to Win winner says, 'Oh my God, you've been amazing. I've entered since the start', that kind of thing. You've got to be quite careful because I think we're all on the edge, you could cry at the drop of a hat. It's so hard sometimes and you think, 'You have to centre yourself'. What we don't have now is the luxury of the live view behind, because what I used to do is get up, look

outside, watch the world go by and think, 'Calm down.' We are all on the brink of tears all the time, so it doesn't take much to push."

What's the one change you've made in lockdown that you're determined to keep?

Holly: "I think organising my time, I think I've got better at that. There's no reason why you have to go across town for a meeting. You can do those things on Zoom within your house and then you're there when the kids get back from school. That type of thing, that real home time. The kids have really enjoyed me being back in the afternoons a lot more and most afternoons I am, because This Morning is in the morning, but quite often I'll have bits and bobs to do. So for me, just having that time at home, I don't want to give too much of that back now."

Phillip: "I've got very protective of local produce and local shops. So for me, whereas there's no question that I would have probably been in big supermarket shops, I now love getting on my bike and going to the butchers and going to the greengrocers and going to the fishmongers. And you suddenly look at all these people, we've had a lot of them on the show, whose livelihood is mussels but they're just throwing them back into the sea - they can't sell them, people aren't buying them. And so for me, what I'll take from this is a little bit more artisan, less of the big world, more of the small world. More locally produced, smaller industries if you can - small butter makers, small cheese makers. Also, the whole Buy British thing. We've got to shop local because we're in a slightly different economic environment and so right, let's hunker down because all of our local shops and services have all suffered enormously and so I will certainly continue to cycle to the butchers."

You both experienced lockdown birthdays, how was that? Are you planning to celebrate again once lockdown is lifted and if so, how?

Phillip: "I hate them anyway, so it doesn't make any difference where they are - lockdown or otherwise. The quieter the better, as far as I'm concerned!"

Holly: "I had the best birthday ever! I had the best time. I don't actually think it could've been any better. I got spoiled rotten. I had such a fuss made over me. I think because everybody feels sorry for you for having a birthday in lockdown, which we've all done now. It was lovely. We're lucky we're able to see faces pop up on screen, like having my friends pop up and all that stuff, so I felt very lucky. I did have a party planned and then obviously cancelled it quite early doors because I was like, 'That's just not going to happen' and then when I cancelled it

in my head, I thought, 'Oh it's fine, because I'll just do it later' but actually it was so perfect my birthday, I don't feel any need to do it anymore. I couldn't have wished for more."

For additional quotes from Phillip and Holly please visit -

www.itv.com/thismorning

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Editor notes:

This Morning is currently seeing it's best ratings in 19 years - over 10 million viewers tuned in during the first week of lockdown alone

So far, (Jan-May 2021) This Morning is averaging 1.19m viewers with a 22.1% share of viewing, up +1.5 share points vs. 2020, but in comparison to 2019 (pre Covid-19) performance is up +2.9 share points and has increased by 34% in volume

The This Morning App has recently surpassed 2 million downloads and the YouTube channel now has more than 2 million subscribers.

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