

Why is good mental health important right now?



As we are challenged with fear and uncertainty, it is easy to neglect your mental health. But taking care of yourself mentally will help to build up your psychological resilience, enhance your immune system, and will ultimately make you better able to help other people and support your community during this difficult time.

Tips on coping with stress, isolation and boredom associated with social distancing

Tip #1: Establish new routines



Establish a routine for yourself and your family. Set what time you wake up, sit down to work, and make sure to take breaks for lunch and coffee. Shower and get dressed as you would for work. Try to find something special to do on the weekends — that may help to keep the weekdays and weekends from blurring together.

Tip #2: Get active



Make sure you're exercising, as studies indicate it can be an effective natural antidepressant. Simply put, exercise is one of the best mental health strategies that exists. Aerobic exercise in particular can help with stress relief, as well as help keep our bodies healthy in the face of medical risks.

It's also very important to engage in activities that you really enjoy, like music, art, painting, or cooking.

Tip #3: Go outside



If you aren't showing signs of being sick and haven't been asked to quarantine yourself, enjoy the outdoors. Take a walk through your neighborhood or a local park — the fresh air, sunshine, and nature will do wonders for your mental and physical health.

Tip #4: Focus on family time



Schedule communal activities for the entire family. You may want to try: reading books or plays, with different family members taking on different roles; cooking (or learning to cook) together; watching movies or television series as a family; or planning out what you'll all do together when the crisis is over.

Tip #5: Connect with friends and people who are vulnerable



There are many ways to be social without potentially spreading the virus. Set up a coffee date over video chat. Host a virtual dinner party. Call your parents. These interactions are important for your own mental health, and they could help other people who are going through a rough time.

Tip #6: Give each other some space



Being cooped up stresses your relationships with the people you live with, but thinking ahead can minimize the strain. People have different needs for solitude. Know yours, know your partner's, know your family members', and don't be afraid to ask for downtime. You have to take breaks from each other, talk to other people, so you're not just putting everything on one person. In addition to communicating your needs, try to be understanding and positive, while realizing that everyone is highly anxious.

Tip #7: Limit your exposure to the newsspace



It's not good to be constantly exposed to negative news. Take breaks from social media and the news, and when things start to feel overwhelming, try yoga, breathing exercises, or other relaxation techniques. The 24-hour cable news cycle addiction was taking its toll before the virus, and now it's more intense than ever. Pay attention, but don't obsess.

Tip #8: Look on the bright side



You could treat social distancing as an opportunity for a reset — for yourself, your relationships, and your approach to your work. Take the time to take account, and to reprioritize. There is more time for self-reflection. In our fulltime wired lives, we often don't take that time to self-reflect, to reassess our values.

Staying at home may free up time for you to learn something new. Consider taking an online course, learning how to play chess, do home repairs, or watch a livestreamed event about a topic you've been interested in.

Look for silver linings in this, as we need optimism going forward.

Tip #9: Recognize that it's ok to feel down, and talk to someone about it



It's expected to feel distressed, and talking to someone about it can be helpful. In addition to talking to friends and loved ones, don't hesitate to seek professional mental health support if you need it.

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