

Wednesday, April 1, 2020

Quarantine Impacts and Coping Mechanisms

Quarantine has a major impact on three key elements of mental health: **autonomy**, **competency**, and **connectedness** - "I don't have control over myself," "I'm not effective," and "I don't belong to any group." These thoughts and conclusions speak directly to the survival part of our brain. In order to stay alive, throughout human history, we have needed to be in control of ourselves, be effective at what we do, and be part of a group. Quarantine, therefore, feels like a direct threat to our survival. When we are threatened, we feel scared. That's OK. We're allowed to be scared. This is a scary situation; being scared doesn't make us weak or weird - it makes us human. We're allowed to be human. We're allowed to feel fear.

Here are some ways to cope with that fear.

Quarantine Coping Mechanisms:

- **Accept Without Judgment your Emotional Response**
 - It is natural and normal to be stressed, anxious, worried, concerned, afraid
 - Feel those things without judgment
 - Accept those feelings and use channel them into actions that maintain physical, psychological, spiritual, and communal well-being
 - Practice Mindfulness Exercises
 - See my *Mindfulness with Mr. Mehle* [Document](#) and [Video](#) for Details
- **Be Aware of the Effects of Stress on Your Relationships**
 - Feelings of stress impact us individually
 - Stressed behaviors impact those around us
 - Can cause high relational tension
 - Take care of yourself in order to take care of others
- **Establish a Routine**
 - See my *Student Daily Schedule* [Document](#) and [Video](#) for Details
- **Be Active**
 - Exercise Videos
 - Bodyweight Exercises
 - Online Workouts
 - Fitness Apps
- **Combat Frustration and Boredom**
 - Be Purposeful
 - Continue and finish or start a new project
 - Organize your space
 - Pursue a hobby
- **Communicate**
 - Immediate Family Members (Those we are Quarantined With)
 - Physical Touch

- Hugging reduces stress, buffers interpersonal conflict, and strengthens immune response
 - Simply expressing feelings of affection reduces stress
 - Core group of people (Family and Friends)
 - Connect personally (video if possible)
 - Phone, text, FaceTime, Skype, Google Duo, etc.
 - Others on social media
 - Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.
 - Talk about things **other than the virus**
 - Join support groups or discussion boards
 - Power of the group is the processing of the shared experience
 - Sense of community
 - Sense of empowerment
- **Stay Connected**
 - Eat regular meals with others in the home
 - Check-in with friends and family each day by phone
 - Use different forms of communication including phone, text, email, messaging, and video call
 - Try supporting others; reassure a friend who feeling stressed out or worried
 - Use social networks such as Twitter and Discord to stay connected to others
 - Lean on each other
 - Know who makes you feel better and turn to them
- **Stay Informed (but not Overwhelmed)**
 - Find reliable, trustworthy sources of factual information
 - CDC
 - WHO
 - State and Local Health Departments
 - Personal Doctor
- **Remember your Purpose**
 - Altruism (not exposing others)
 - Flattening the Curve
 - Allow Health system to respond to a little at a time, not all at once
 - making sure that those who are sick are able to have greater access to available health resources
 - You are not “**Stuck** at Home,” you are “**Safe** at Home”
- **Connect with Your Religion or Spirituality**
 - Pray or meditate.
 - Many forms of prayer and meditation involve sending positive thoughts and wishes to others. Regardless of your religious beliefs, taking time out to focus your mind on compassionate thoughts can be healing.
 - Loving-kindness meditation
 - Silently repeating phrases like “May you be happy” and “May you be free from suffering,” directed towards oneself and loved ones, and then

broadening gradually to include people across the world, and all living things. [A guided meditation can be found here](#). Research suggests that this practice can increase feelings of social connectedness as well as self-acceptance. Especially in hard times like these, it can be helpful to feel that sense of common humanity.

- **Seek Professional Help**

- Local Mental Health Resources

- Help for West Virginia

- 1-844-HELP4WV
- 1-844-435-7498
- www.help4wv.com

- Chestnut Ridge Center

- 304-598-6400
- <https://medicine.hsc.wvu.edu/bmed/contact-us/>

- United Summit Center

- Crisis Hotline: 1-800-786-6480
- Main Office: 304-623-5661
- www.uscwv.org

- Valley Health Care

- Main Office: 304-296-1731
- Crisis Hotline: 1-800-232-0020
- www.valleyhealthcare.org

- Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center (RDVIC) - Morgantown, WV

- We are now suspending all in-person advocacy at this time, but our advocates will still be available 24/7 through our hotline (304-292-5100) to provide support, hospital advocacy, and assist with emergency protective orders by phone.
- <https://www.rdvic.org/>
- If you have any questions, contact us at:
 - Hotline - (304-292-5100)
 - Message us on our Facebook page or
 - Email us at rdvic99@earthlink.net
 - Please continue to check our website for updates: <https://www.rdvic.org/>

- National Mental Health Resources:

- Substance Abuse

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA's) National Helpline – 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

- SAMHSA's National Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

- <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

- Suicide
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255
 - National Crisis Text Line - Text HOME to 741741
 - <https://www.crisistextline.org/texting-in>
 - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention - <https://afsp.org/>
- Best Online Therapy Programs of 2020
 - <https://www.verywellmind.com/best-online-therapy-4691206>

51 ways to find pleasure in the wake of social isolation:

IMPORTANT: The goal isn't to do all of these, rather it's to use this list to inspire ideas for a few activities or behaviors that best align with your unique preferences and needs.

1. **Get cozy** - Don those warm socks and soften the lighting, or do whatever ignites your sense of cozy.
2. **Write a gratitude list** - Set a timer for five minutes and start writing what you're grateful for.
3. **Tap into purpose** - Learn more about the power of purpose here. And here's more on the power of purpose at work.
4. **Write down your "moments of meaning"** - Similar to the way one might approach a gratitude list, take five minutes to jot down at least a few moments in your week that stood out (e.g., a positive conversation with a colleague, observing a beautiful sunset). You may find yourself with many more than you would have guessed.
5. **Stream a fitness class** - From boot camp to yoga, ymca360.org is just one of the places to find free virtual classes. Got kids at home? Check out Cosmic Kids Yoga online.
6. **Practice mindfulness** - Headspace, leading mindfulness app, is now free for healthcare practitioners, and Mindful@home offers free live guided meditations from leading teachers.
7. **Color** - For those who "don't do mindfulness," coloring is another way to quiet the mind. Not sure where to begin? Try this free virtual course with Mo Willems delivered by the Kennedy Center (yes, that Mo Willems).
8. **Do one thing at a time** - Multitasking is taxing. Give yourself the gift of uni-tasking.
9. **Clean your house** - Yes, many really do find this relaxing!
10. **Connect with friends and family** - Connection with other humans is quite possibly the number one salve against stress. Block off more time than you think you need to reach out virtually to others.
11. **Smell cinnamon** - Certain scents have the power to soothe. Essential oils are great, but so are items like cinnamon, vanilla, nutmeg, and coffee, which more people happen to already have in their home.
12. **Put lemon in your water** - Find small ways to elevate the everyday experience.
13. **Bake** - You can bake as a fun way to connect with your kids, for mental relaxation, to cozy up your home with delicious smells, or simply for the delicious outcome.
14. **Live by your core values** - This one sounds big, but it can be as simple as identifying one of your core values and choosing one way to live it out. For instance, if

“compassion” is a core value, you might reach out to check in on a friend or make a donation to a local food bank. If financial security is a core value, you might remind yourself that by continuing to work or look for a job (times are tough for so many) you are honoring your values.

15. **Leverage your strengths** - The VIA Institute on Character has a free survey to help you identify your top strengths, so you can put them to use in these challenging times.
16. **Dance** - Choose a favorite song on Spotify, or an entire playlist, and dance like no one's watching.
17. **Go for a walk** - If you are still permitted to go for a stroll, this has countless benefits for health and wellbeing.
18. **Tour a museum** - Google's Arts and Culture collection enables us to virtually tour some of the world's most famous museums from our couch
19. **Wear clothes you feel great in** - Veteran remote workers advise getting dressed no matter what.
20. **Name your feelings** - Negative feelings tend to amplify when we push them down. “Labeling” is a simple practice that can help us tame difficult emotions. When you feel the feelings bubbling up try saying “oh hello anxiety” or “hi there fear.” Don't forget to also notice the positive feelings.
21. **Draw your feelings** - If naming feels out of reach, try setting a timer for 10 minutes and drawing what's inside.
22. **Cry** - So often we feel unburdened after a good cry. Cry to a friend, or alongside a touching movie.
23. **Take a nap** - Here are some tips from sleepfoundation.org for napping well.
24. **Cook a special meal** - Special can range from gourmet to simply setting the table like you would for a treasured friend's visit.
25. **Create a resilience journal** - List difficult experiences you've overcome, especially ones from which you emerged stronger.
26. **Recall a pleasant memory** - Think about a place you visited that relaxed you. Imagine it vividly enough and you may start to feel as if you were there!
27. **Journal** - A simple notebook yields endless possibilities. Many teachers are recommending kids to keep a daily journal they can share with their friends once schools are back in session. So "journal time" can be a family affair.
28. **Watch TV** - For many, Hulu and Netflix are key ways to relax.
29. **Watch a movie** - Ditto.
30. **Watch something funny** - According the Mayo Clinic, laughter really can be the best medicine.
31. **Laugh** - Seriously, just start laughing!
32. **Limit news consumption** - How would it be to limit your news consumption to one to two times per day of checking into trusted sources?
33. **Craft** - Arts and crafts can be joyful and soothing for kids of all ages.
34. **Make a highly achievable to-do list** - It can feel good to check those boxes! Each item can be as simple as “eat breakfast” and “shower.”

35. **Send a gratitude letter** - Dr. Martin Seligman touts the benefits of sending a letter to someone detailing something they did that you are grateful for. You can read this to them aloud or send it by email.
36. **Free-write about your best possible future** - A crucible in positive psychology, you can learn more here.
37. **Do something kind** - Send a nice text, make a donation within your means, or find other ways, small or large, to practice kindness at a distance.
38. **Support local business** - Many businesses and restaurants still offer delivery.
39. **Listen to music** - Music has many psychological benefits, including reducing stress, helping to manage pain, and even helping to curb overeating.
40. **Get a full night's sleep** - When we lose the regular rhythm of our day, we may also find our sleep disrupted. Here are some simple tips from the CDC for "sleep hygiene" that can nudge us towards better ZZZs.
41. **Treat yourself like you would a best friend** - A common source of stress is negative self-talk. For instance, we might berate ourselves for not getting enough done in a way we would never speak to even our worst enemy. Therapists and psychologists often recommend to instead try to speak to yourself as a friend. It may be harder than it sounds so I recommend simplifying by practicing for two minutes at a time.
42. **Hug** - Hug someone in your household, or if living alone, give yourself a bear hug.
43. **Play "would you rather?" via text** - This age-old game has endured for a reason.
44. **Send a meme** - It may ignite laughter and all the psychological benefits that go along with that.
45. **Start a text chain** - It might be hard to carve out time to keep up with all our friends and family individually. Instead, try grouping family members or groups of friends together for group chats to enhance the fun and reduce the pressure.
46. **Disconnect** - Take a two-hour break from technology.
47. **Drink a warm beverage** - You can do this by yourself, or ask a friend to join you for a "virtual coffee."
48. **Kick your feet up** - A key pose in restorative yoga is lying down with the legs up against a wall.
49. **Look for the helpers** - In the wise words of Mr. Rogers: "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.' To this day, especially in times of 'disaster,' I remember my mother's words and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers—so many caring people in this world."
50. **Play with your pet** - If you love pets but don't have one, look up pet photos.
51. **Breathe** - Take a few mindful breaths.

These 51 Ideas are from:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/lifes-work/202003/51-simple-ways-de-stress-and-find-joy-home>

Other Sources Used:

- <https://www.verywellmind.com/protect-your-mental-health-during-quarantine-4799766>

- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-fallible-mind/202003/tips-emotional-self-management-in-these-uncertain-times>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-intelligent-divorce/202003/how-manage-the-psychological-effects-quarantine>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/happiness-and-the-pursuit-leadership/202003/stay-social-while-engaging-in-social-distancing>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-love-and-war/202003/10-ideas-coping-loneliness-during-social-distancing>
- <https://boisdejasmin.com/2020/03/how-to-survive-self-isolation-and-not-to-lose-ones-mind.html>

Other Helpful Articles:

- Self Care and Social Distancing
 - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/modern-mentality/202003/self-care-and-social-distancing>
- Coping: Dealing with Life's Inevitable Disappointments in a Healthy Way
 - <https://positivepsychology.com/coping/>
- Why You Freak Out: How to Calm Intense Emotions, Part 1
 - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/healing-stress-the-inside-out/202001/why-you-freak-out>
- Manage Your Freak-Outs With Understanding and Self-Compassion: How to Calm Intense Emotions, Part 2
 - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/healing-stress-the-inside-out/202002/meet-your-freak-outs-understanding-and-self-compassion>
- How to Be Kinder to Yourself
 - <https://ideas.ted.com/how-to-be-kinder-to-yourself-self-compassion/>