MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS TIPS FOR QUARANTINE  
  
1. Stick to a routine. Go to sleep and wake up at a reasonable time, write  
a schedule that is varied and includes time for work as well as self-care.  
  
2. Dress for the social life you want, not the social life you have. Get  
showered and dressed in comfortable clothes, wash your face, brush your  
teeth. Take the time to do a bath or a facial. Put on some bright colors.  
It is amazing how our dress can impact our mood.  
  
3. Get out at least once a day, for at least thirty minutes. If you are  
concerned of contact, try first thing in the morning, or later in the  
evening, and try less traveled streets and avenues. If you are high risk or  
living with those who are high risk, open the windows and blast the fan. It  
is amazing how much fresh air can do for spirits.  
  
4. Find some time to move each day, again daily for at least thirty  
minutes. If you don’t feel comfortable going outside, there are many  
YouTube videos that offer free movement classes, and if all else fails,  
turn on the music and have a dance party!  
  
5. Reach out to others, you guessed it, at least once daily for thirty  
minutes. Try to do FaceTime, Skype, phone calls, texting—connect with other  
people to seek and provide support. Don’t forget to do this for your  
children as well. Set up virtual playdates with friends daily via FaceTime,  
Facebook Messenger Kids, Zoom, etc—your kids miss their friends, too!  
  
6. Stay hydrated and eat well. This one may seem obvious, but stress and  
eating often don’t mix well, and we find ourselves over-indulging,  
forgetting to eat, and avoiding food. Drink plenty of water, eat some good  
and nutritious foods, and challenge yourself to learn how to cook something  
new!  
  
7. Develop a self-care toolkit. This can look different for everyone. A lot  
of successful self-care strategies involve a sensory component (seven  
senses: touch, taste, sight, hearing, smell, vestibular (movement) and  
proprioceptive (comforting pressure). An idea for each: a soft blanket or  
stuffed animal, a hot chocolate, photos of vacations, comforting music,  
lavender or eucalyptus oil, a small swing or rocking chair, a weighted  
blanket. A journal, an inspirational book, or a mandala coloring book is  
wonderful, bubbles to blow or blowing watercolor on paper through a straw  
are visually appealing as well as work on controlled breath. Mint gum,  
Listerine strips, ginger ale, frozen Starburst, ice packs, and cold are  
also good for anxiety regulation. For children, it is great to help them  
create a self-regulation comfort box (often a shoe-box or bin they can  
decorate) that they can use on the ready for first-aid when overwhelmed.  
  
8. Spend extra time playing with children. Children will rarely communicate  
how they are feeling, but will often make a bid for attention and  
communication through play. Don’t be surprised to see therapeutic themes of  
illness, doctor visits, and isolation play through. Understand that play is  
cathartic and helpful for children—it is how they process their world and  
problem solve, and there’s a lot they are seeing and experiencing in the  
now.  
  
9. Give everyone the benefit of the doubt, and a wide berth. A lot of  
cooped up time can bring out the worst in everyone. Each person will have  
moments when they will not be at their best. It is important to move with  
grace through blowups, to not show up to every argument you are invited to,  
and to not hold grudges and continue disagreements. Everyone is doing the  
best they can to make it through this.  
  
10. Everyone find their own retreat space. Space is at a premium,  
particularly with city living. It is important that people think through  
their own separate space for work and for relaxation. For children, help  
them identify a place where they can go to retreat when stressed. You can  
make this place cozy by using blankets, pillows, cushions, scarves,  
beanbags, tents, and “forts”. It is good to know that even when we are on  
top of each other, we have our own special place to go to be alone.  
  
11. Expect behavioral issues in children, and respond gently. We are all  
struggling with disruption in routine, none more than children, who rely on  
routines constructed by others to make them feel safe and to know what  
comes next. Expect increased anxiety, worries and fears, nightmares,  
difficulty separating or sleeping, testing limits, and meltdowns. Do not  
introduce major behavioral plans or consequences at this time—hold stable  
and focus on emotional connection.  
  
12. Focus on safety and attachment. We are going to be living for a bit  
with the unprecedented demand of meeting all work deadlines, homeschooling  
children, running a sterile household, and making a whole lot of  
entertainment in confinement. We can get wrapped up in meeting expectations  
in all domains, but we must remember that these are scary and unpredictable  
times for children. Focus on strengthening the connection through time  
spent following their lead, through physical touch, through play, through  
therapeutic books, and via verbal reassurances that you will be there for  
them in this time.  
  
13. Lower expectations and practice radical self-acceptance. This idea is  
connected with #12. We are doing too many things in this moment, under fear  
and stress. This does not make a formula for excellence. Instead, give  
yourself what psychologists call “radical self acceptance”: accepting  
everything about yourself, your current situation, and your life without  
question, blame, or pushback. You cannot fail at this—there is no roadmap,  
no precedent for this, and we are all truly doing the best we can in an  
impossible situation.  
  
14. Limit social media and COVID conversation, especially around children.  
One can find tons of information on COVID-19 to consume, and it changes  
minute to minute. The information is often sensationalized, negatively  
skewed, and alarmist. Find a few trusted sources that you can check in with  
consistently, limit it to a few times a day, and set a time limit for  
yourself on how much you consume (again 30 minutes tops, 2-3 times daily).  
Keep news and alarming conversations out of earshot from children—they see  
and hear everything, and can become very frightened by what they hear.  
  
15. Notice the good in the world, the helpers. There is a lot of scary,  
negative, and overwhelming information to take in regarding this pandemic.  
There are also a ton of stories of people sacrificing, donating, and  
supporting one another in miraculous ways. It is important to  
counter-balance the heavy information with the hopeful information.  
  
16. Help others. Find ways, big and small, to give back to others. Support  
restaurants, offer to grocery shop, check in with elderly neighbors, write  
psychological wellness tips for others—helping others gives us a sense of  
agency when things seem out of control.  
  
17. Find something you can control, and control the heck out of it. In  
moments of big uncertainty and overwhelm, control your little corner of the  
world. Organize your bookshelf, purge your closet, put together that  
furniture, group your toys. It helps to anchor and ground us when the  
bigger things are chaotic.  
  
18. Find a long-term project to dive into. Now is the time to learn how to  
play the keyboard, put together a huge jigsaw puzzle, start a 15 hour game  
of Risk, paint a picture, read the Harry Potter series, binge watch an  
8-season show, crochet a blanket, solve a Rubix cube, or develop a new town  
in Animal Crossing. Find something that will keep you busy, distracted, and  
engaged to take breaks from what is going on in the outside world.  
  
19. Engage in repetitive movements and left-right movements. Research has  
shown that repetitive movement (knitting, coloring, painting, clay  
sculpting, jump roping etc) especially left-right movement (running,  
drumming, skating, hopping) can be effective at self-soothing and  
maintaining self-regulation in moments of distress.  
  
20. Find an expressive art and go for it. Our emotional brain is very  
receptive to the creative arts, and it is a direct portal for release of  
feeling. Find something that is creative (sculpting, drawing, dancing,  
music, singing, playing) and give it your all. See how relieved you can  
feel. It is a very effective way of helping kids to emote and communicate  
as well!  
  
21. Find lightness and humor in each day. There is a lot to be worried  
about, and with good reason. Counterbalance this heaviness with something  
funny each day: cat videos on YouTube, a stand-up show on Netflix, a funny  
movie—we all need a little comedic relief in our day, every day.  
  
22. Reach out for help—your team is there for you. If you have a therapist  
or psychiatrist, they are available to you, even at a distance. Keep up  
your medications and your therapy sessions the best you can. If you are  
having difficulty coping, seek out help for the first time. There are  
mental health people on the ready to help you through this crisis. Your  
children’s teachers and related service providers will do anything within  
their power to help, especially for those parents tasked with the difficult  
task of being a whole treatment team to their child with special  
challenges. Seek support groups of fellow home-schoolers, parents, and  
neighbors to feel connected. There is help and support out there, any time  
of the day—although we are physically distant, we can always connect  
virtually.  
  
23. “Chunk” your quarantine, take it moment by moment. We have no road map  
for this. We don’t know what this will look like in 1 day, 1 week, or 1  
month from now. Often, when I work with patients who have anxiety around  
overwhelming issues, I suggest that they engage in a strategy called  
“chunking”—focusing on whatever bite-sized piece of a challenge that feels  
manageable. Whether that be 5 minutes, a day, or a week at a time—find what  
feels doable for you, and set a time stamp for how far ahead in the future  
you will let yourself worry. Take each chunk one at a time, and move  
through stress in pieces.  
  
24. Remind yourself daily that this is temporary. It seems in the midst of  
this quarantine that it will never end. It is terrifying to think of the  
road stretching ahead of us. Please take time to remind yourself that  
although this is very scary and difficult, and will go on for an  
undetermined amount of time, it is a season of life and it will pass. We  
will return to feeing free, safe, busy, and connected in the days ahead.  
  
25. Find the lesson. This whole crisis can seem sad, senseless, and at  
times, avoidable. When psychologists work with trauma, a key feature to  
helping someone work through said trauma is to help them find their agency,  
the potential positive outcomes they can effect, the meaning and  
construction that can come out of destruction. What can each of us learn  
here, in big and small ways, from this crisis? What needs to change in  
ourselves, our homes, our communities, our nation, and our world?