

Tips for Maintaining Mental Health in Self-Isolation

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Social distancing has resulted in many of us living in isolation, with little of the social contact we need to feel healthy and strong. We do this in order to protect our health, our loved ones, and our communities. But chronic self-isolation can take a heavy toll on mental health, affecting mood, self-esteem, and anxiety levels. These challenges will likely be present as long as social distancing is necessary, but you can manage some of the negative effects by...

...caring for your body.

- Breathe fresh air daily if possible - even if you're just outside for a few minutes
- Exercise regularly - it doesn't have to be intense, but at least take a stroll or stretch to get your body moving
- Try to engage in healthy eating habits (though show compassion for increased snacking)
- Drink plenty of water
- Get enough sleep
- Rest when you need to
- Get properly dressed most days

...maintaining connections.

- Make a point to talk to at least one person per day, hopefully by voice or video
- Eat dinner or have coffee with a friend over Zoom
- Connect with a friend or family member you haven't talked to in a while

...seeking entertainment.

- Watch some shows or movies you have been meaning to watch
- Listen to music you haven't heard before
- Play single-player games such as Solitaire or do a jigsaw puzzle

...finding oxytocin (the cuddle hormone) where you can.

- Pet your animals if you have them
- Watch animal videos or look at photos of adorable animals. Check out: Too Cute on Animal Planet or ZooBorns.com

...cultivating creativity.

- Try some new recipes, even if you aren't generally someone who likes to cook
- Get some sidewalk chalk and have fun. Draw pictures or leave supportive messages for friends, neighbors, postal workers, etc.
- Use YouTube or something similar to learn a new skill (knitting, ukulele playing, make-up application, etc.)
- Paint – free hand or by numbers, as long as there is a brush in hand. Don't worry about how it looks. Just enjoy the process.

...focusing your mind.

- Memorize your favorite poem
- Do a daily crossword puzzle
- Use an app such as Duolingo to learn a new language

...anticipating a COVID-free future.

- Spend some time planning a trip you hope to take when that becomes an option again
- Research a new activity so you're prepared to begin whenever you can

...making meaning of the present.

- Notice your feelings and give yourself permission to feel them
- Write about your experiences in a journal
- Give yourself a break from self-criticism and remember that you're doing the best you can
- Take one day at a time as much as possible