

COVID-19 / Coronavirus Advice and Support Dr Phil Lurie, Clinical Psychologist

Handout 1. Physical Well-Being in Social Isolation

Staying physically healthy allows us to feel relaxed and sleep better, and reduces anxiety and depression. Eating and exercising well, and being thoughtful about our living space will improve our mood and sleep. Here is some advice to help manage this:

EXERCISE

- Move your body

Find online exercise, stretching and/or yoga videos. You do not need a gym or even much space to do some form of exercise. Keep to a routine and try some exercise every day. If you can, work out with others, whether in the same room or virtually, to aid motivation and maintain social connections.

- Remember why exercise is important and be creative

When in isolation, we may think it is difficult to achieve the same level of exercise and it is easy to become lethargic. Remind yourself of the reason it is important for you to work out. We may not be able to run a marathon or lift barbells but there are always ways to mimic anything; why not jog on the spot with high knees or find objects to lift around the house? There are high-intensive exercises we can do at home, such as push-ups and planks, if you require something strenuous.

- Try a challenge

We can lose motivation when our goal is to “get fit”. Instead it helps to try a daily countable challenge, such as increasing the number of sit-ups every day, which allows us to measure our improvement. Plans like the ‘one month 100 push-up challenge’ can be found online.

- Use reward if you are not motivated to exercise

If you want to work out but find it difficult to start, why not reward yourself with something after, for example, only watching an episode of television after completing 15 minutes of exercise.

DIET

- Eat and drink well

Where possible, include fresh food that is full of vitamins and nutrients. Store processed foods such as nuts, grains and beans and include them often in your diet. Drink plenty of water.

- Be creative in the kitchen

Being isolated can still offer challenges and achievements; why not try out new recipes/skills?

SLEEP

- The bed is designed for sleep

It is easy when at home to spend time on your bed during the day. Try to refrain from being on it, otherwise your brain will associate bed with other activities when you do try to sleep at night.

- Prepare for sleep

Turn off your phone, do not drink caffeine, and practise mindful activities ahead of your bedtime.

LIVING SPACE

- Love your space

If you have to spend a lot of time in one place, it is important to clean, tidy and brighten up the area. Can you tend to some plants? Designate some areas as “separate from stress”, e.g. a chair just for reading, a corner just for doing exercise, away from checking social media and the news.

We collectively face difficult times with Coronavirus, and I would like to offer ONLINE support to anyone experiencing low mood, anxiety, worry and/or panic or other difficulties. It is especially important to talk to a professional if you are concerned about the mental health effects of potential/actual isolation. Please contact me at skypeclinicalpsychologist@gmail.com to book a therapy session. Please let me know if you require reduced fees due to any financial difficulties.