



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at The Shandro Group



MAINTAINING MENTAL WELL-BEING DURING A QUARANTINE

In response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization have recommended that individuals who may have been exposed to the disease self-quarantine at home for 14 days. In addition, public health officials are recommending that healthy individuals practice social distancing, staying at home to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Following the advice of public health officials can help stop the spread of COVID-19, but if you don't take proper precautions, your mental well-being could suffer while you're quarantining.

If you're self-quarantining or practicing social distancing, keep the following tips in mind to maintain your mental well-being.

Maintain a Routine

One of the best things that you can do to preserve your mental well-being is to stick to a routine. For example, if you're used to going to the gym before work, try to wake up early and get an at-home workout in before you go to work or start your workday from home. Maintaining as much normalcy as possible with your daily routine can help keep your mood as lifted as possible, and prevent boredom and distress from taking over.

If you have children that will be at home now, it's also important to create a routine for them. Whether they

are practicing virtual learning with their schools or if they will just be home, you should implement a structured schedule for them so they know what your expectations are. Try to limit as much screen time as possible and incorporate learning activities throughout the day.

Get a Good Night's Sleep

This suggestion goes hand-in-hand with sticking to a routine. While you're at home, it can be easy to go to bed or sleep in later than you typically would. Breaking your normal sleep routine can have negative effects on your overall mental well-being, so you should try to stick to your typical schedule as much as possible.

Spend Time Outside

Unless health officials give you explicit instructions to stay in your home no matter what, try to get outside periodically throughout the day. This could involve going out in your backyard or taking a walk around the block, but shouldn't include going to a park or other areas where large groups of people may be.

Being outside also helps to promote higher vitamin D levels, a vitamin the body makes when skin is directly exposed to the sun. Many people are deficient in vitamin D, so exercising outside can be a great way to correct that.



Leverage the Power of Technology

When in quarantine or self-isolation, it can be easy to feel lonely. Fortunately, advancements in technology have made it easy to connect with others without having to physically be in contact with them. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recommends reaching out to loved ones with technology to reduce feelings of loneliness and anxiety, and to supplement your social life while you're quarantining or social distancing. If you're feeling down, use video calling technology or social media to get in touch with friends and family.

Don't Obsess Over the News

It can be easy to become overwhelmed by watching the news and reviewing the updates of the COVID-19 situation. While it's important to be informed of the situation, you should not obsess over the news. For example, instead of monitoring the news all day from home, consider checking for updates once in the morning and once at night.

Practice Positivity and Gratitude

Taking five minutes a day to write down the things that you are grateful for has been proven to lower stress levels and can help you change your mindset from negative to positive. While you're quarantining or social distancing, it's important to build time into your routine to practice positivity or express gratitude to change your mindset on your situation and boost your mood.

Summary

Your mental well-being plays a huge role in your overall health and well-being, and it should be prioritized. These six suggestions may help you maintain your mental well-being during a quarantine, but shouldn't be considered as medical advice.

If you have concerns about your mental well-being while you're in quarantine, please contact your mental health professional or use SAMHSA's National Helpline by calling 800-662-HELP (4357).



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BALANCING WORKING FROM HOME AND CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES

For many across the country, working from home is their new reality for the foreseeable future as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread rapidly. For some, this arrangement is business as usual. But for others, including parents and caregivers, they now face the difficult task of balancing their working from home and caregiving responsibilities.

If you're in this situation, it may be difficult to navigate. Use the strategies outlined below to help you manage your telecommuting and caregiving responsibilities.

Set a Schedule

Humans crave structure, regardless of whether they're working in the office or at home. As such, while you're working from home, it's important to create a schedule and stick to it. For example, if you're used to going to the gym before work, try to wake up early and get an at-home workout in before you start your workday from home.

Setting a schedule for yourself is just as important as setting one for those whom you're looking after at home. If you have children at home, try to mirror their school schedule as much as possible. For example, have them wake up at the same time that they would for school, eat breakfast and get ready. Then, have them work on activities for specific times, building in time for meals and going outside.

For other loved ones you may be caring for, try to incorporate their standard routine with your personal

schedule. Consider eating meals together and taking breaks to go for a walk outside or spend time together.

Create Separate Spaces

When you're working from home, it's important that you create separate spaces for yourself and those you're looking after.

Ideally, your at-home workstation would be at a desk or table, away from any distractions such as the TV. Trying to work from your bed or couch can be challenging, since such locations are associated with sleep and relaxation. Creating this separation will benefit your productivity as well as your mental well-being.

Not only will this help you remain productive at work, but it will also help communicate to others that when you're in your workspace, you're working. Additionally, creating these separate spaces will further instill the schedule that you set.

Take Breaks

Just because you're working from home doesn't mean you can't take breaks. Coordinate all of the schedules so that you can take a break with your loved ones at the same time. Consider getting outside to get some



fresh air and exercise.

Make sure to stand up and distance yourself from your at-home workstation. It's extremely important for your mental well-being to maintain physical separation between your work and home life while you're working at home.

Communication Is Key

When you're balancing your job and caregiving responsibilities, it's important that you communicate with those you're looking after. It's also important that you're honest about your situation with managers and co-workers. Doing so will help ensure that expectations can be properly set and managed during the time you're working from home.



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OVERCOMING LONELINESS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

As public health officials work to slow the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), many have recommended social distancing and self-quarantining. Some states across the country have issued orders for people to stay at home unless it's essential they leave, and some employers have had to send employees home or ask them to work remotely. While these actions can help slow the spread, they can have negative effects on your mental health.

What Is Loneliness?

While the words may sound alike, loneliness and being alone are not the same thing. Loneliness is a subject that has been studied for a long time in psychological literature.

Loneliness can lead to an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and dementia. According to the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, loneliness and social isolation can be as damaging as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Overcoming Loneliness During the Pandemic

If you're feeling lonely in these uncertain times, you're not alone. Many Americans are trying to overcome those same feelings. Fortunately, there are many things that you can do to fight loneliness and maintain your mental well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stick to a Schedule

One of the best things that you can do to fight loneliness is to create a new normal by sticking to a schedule. For example, if you're used to going to the gym before work, try to wake up early and get an at-home workout in before you start your workday from home. Build in times for meals and short breaks like you would for a normal workday in the office.

Maintaining as much normalcy as possible with your daily routine can help lift your mood and prevent boredom and distress from taking over. It can also help make the days feel structured rather than long and endless.

Use Technology to Connect With Loved Ones

When in quarantine or self-isolation, it can be easy to feel lonely. Fortunately, advancements in technology have made it easy to connect with others without having to physically be in contact with them. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recommends reaching out to loved ones with technology to reduce feelings of loneliness and anxiety, and to supplement your social life while you're quarantining or social distancing. If you're feeling down, use video-calling technology



or social media to get in touch with friends and family.

Get Plenty of Exercise

Exercising is a great way to boost your mood, ease stress and feel productive. Your physical and mental health are interconnected, so it's essential that you focus on both of them while you're staying at home.

If it's safe for you to do so, consider going for a walk around your neighborhood or exercising in your backyard. Going outside can help boost your mood and fight loneliness by increasing your body's levels of vitamin D.

Another way to get exercise at home is to look up workouts on the internet. If you belong to a gym, check online to see if they've published at-home workouts that you can try too.

Remain Informed, But Don't Obsess

The COVID-19 pandemic is a rapidly evolving situation, and it seems that there's new information daily. While it's important and beneficial to your health to remain informed about the situation, it's detrimental to your mental health if you obsess over the news. Moreover, excessively checking the news can make you feel even more isolated. Instead of monitoring the news all day from home, consider checking for updates once in the morning and once at night.

Practice Mindfulness and Gratitude

Taking five minutes a day to write down the things that you are grateful for has been proven to lower stress levels and can help you change your mindset from negative to positive. While you're quarantining or social distancing, it's important to build time into your routine to practice positivity or express gratitude in an effort to change your mindset and boost your mood.

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented changes in many people's day-to-day lives. By keeping the above tips in mind, you can be well on your way to fighting loneliness during these uncertain times.

If you have concerns about your mental well-being while you're in quarantine, please contact your mental health professional or use SAMHSA's National Helpline by calling 800-662-HELP (4357).