

## TIPS ON STAYING MENTALLY HEALTHY DURING QUARANTINE AS A RESULT OF COVID-19

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is certainly a stressful and unusual time for us all. It is a time full of unknowns and marred by fear. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in each of us. Added to this are the restrictions put in place and the resulting quarantine period that many people will have to adhere to. It is important to remember that everyone reacts differently to stressful situations and that we should not compare ourselves to how others are coping. It is equally important to focus on our mental health during this time, the implications for our mental well-being cannot be underestimated. Below are some tips on how to stay mentally healthy during a quarantine period:

- **Create a routine** - Wake up at the same time as you usually would, change out of your pajamas, shower, have breakfast. Make a list of all the things you want to achieve each day to create a sense of normality and productivity.
- **Break up your day** - Find tasks to break up your day and, where possible, change your environment for different activities. Move to a different room in your house or flat if possible. If not then simply take a break from your environment by walking about your living space.
- **Take care of your body** - Eat healthily, get the same amount of sleep you usually would- remember healthy and regular sleep cycles are crucial to our mental health. Try exercise daily, this could include conducting indoor workout classes (available online), stretching and yoga. Practice meditation and relaxation techniques focusing on your breathing and thought patterns.
- **Help others** - If you're not under strict isolation rules yourself, and you're in a position to do so, find ways to support those in need by offering to run errands and collect supplies for them. Or if you are in strict isolation and have access to others via virtual means help them by checking in and supporting those you can. Perhaps even lend a hand virtually to those who you know are not technologically savvy or who have no access to technology by helping them order their groceries online for example. Helping others releases positive thoughts and adds meaning and value to our lives.
- **Stay connected** - Make the most of technology (if you have access to it) and stay

in touch with colleagues, friends and family via phone calls, texts, social media and video calling. It is especially important to focus on social connection during this time. Self-isolation does not mean social isolation!

- **Limit media intake** - Stay informed about the outbreak via reliable sources, social media is not always reliable and can spread fake news, however limit your news and social media intake to avoid feeling overwhelmed which is bound to increase your anxiety.
- **Fight boredom** - Make the most of catching up TV series and documentaries, reading, games, puzzles and thinking about projects you have been putting off for all this time (this includes even those more mundane house tasks such as tidying up cupboards etc.). This will help alleviate boredom and will help with keeping up your motivation levels.
- **Avoid burnout** - If working from home set strict limits to your work- i.e. keep to the same hours you would if you were working as normal from your office.
- **Focus on the positives** - Amplify good news stories, start a gratitude journal, meditation and positive affirmations are also advised. Share jokes and 'happy news' stories with friends.
- **Take one day at a time** - Try not to project too far into the future and become overwhelmed with questions about the unknown.
- Remember that this is **temporary and you are not alone**. Find hope and faith in the famous quote dating back to King Solomon "Gam ze Ya'avov" - "This too shall pass".

In concluding a structured routine, staying in contact with people virtually, engaging in activities that give you pleasure and a sense of meaning, and doing what you can to help others, are all a remarkable antidote to depression and anxiety.

