

Looking after yourself during the COVID-19 pandemic

The pandemic and lockdown have brought many additional stressors into our lives.

These have caused us to shift our priorities and often neglect our mental health. Self-care is about actively looking after your mental health and well-being to protect yourself from the harmful effects of cumulative stress.



Self-care techniques, like the ones listed below, can help prevent mental health difficulties and manage any ongoing symptoms.

1. Relaxation

When we feel down, worried or stressed, our body naturally becomes tense, tired and achy, this can worsen our mood. Taking some time to relax and soothe the body can be an important way to take care of our mind. This can be done by practising deep breathing, some simple stretches, listening to music, or following a relaxation exercise or guided meditation online.

2. Nourishing your relationships

The current situation has made normal social interactions challenging, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness. This is quite unhealthy for our mental well being, as we all rely on social contact.

Take small opportunities to feel more connected with the people (and animals) around you- asking a friend about their day or going for a walk with your dog - to nurture a sense of closeness. Helping others can be a meaningful way to feel better. Small actions that help us to be a good friend or family member, or contribute to our community give us a sense of purpose and connection.

3. Doing things you enjoy

Try to ensure that you keep aside some time each day for things you enjoy - this can be from small pleasures like sipping a cup of tea to creative activities like learning a new skill or hobby. If you are struggling with motivation, try planning an activity for each day in advance, write it down and tick it off once you have done it.



4. Disconnect from the virtual world

Spending long hours on the screen for work or play and the constant barrage of information about the pandemic on social media has put a strain on our lives and a need to unplug and balance our real and virtual lives. It is important that our daily routine include 'tech-free hours' without notifications and devices on silent mode, a 'wake-up routine' without a phone and spaces in the house dedicated as 'tech-free zones'. Also importantly, connect with nature and discover alternative forms of entertainment.

5. Seek professional help

An important part of taking care of ourselves is acknowledging when we need more support. If the challenges with your mood impact your everyday life despite things you have been doing to improve the situation, it may be a good time to consider professional help. To find out more about service providers and platforms visit the resources centre on our website.

Some important points to remember about self-care are

- Make your own self-care routine
- Pick activities that help you connect with yourself
- Take breaks and do things that you enjoy
- Do not worry about doing things right
- Be present and without any distractions
- SELF-care is not SELFish!
- Self-care is a daily and long-term activity

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