EIGHT PRACTICAL IDEAS TO IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH DURING THESE TIMES

The spread of the coronavirus is creating fear and anxiety across the world, and understandably so. This is a time of sheltering, or self-isolation, as many refer to it. It also is the perfect time to introduce some healthy habits into your home environment which can set you and your family up more positively for the future.

Here are some practical ideas to help you along your way:

01 Communicate

Many people struggle with anxiety during this time, and it's understandable to have concerns about the future. However, it's important that you share your concerns and communicate well with those who can support you best. At meals talk about the day and any news or concerns your family are feeling. Fake news abounds, so this is a good time to debate where the truths lie and how to deal with it.

If you're in lockdown in a confined space, or surrounded by many roommates or family members, it's important to respect each other's needs and to communicate openly and proactively.

For example, if you have to work in such an environment, communicate that you require a place where you can be productive. Work together to ensure your business continuity is important. Boundaries around noise, and even bandwidth usage need to be set up in advance, not as an afterthought when there is conflict.

02 Become more mindful

Instead of worrying about issues outside of your control, now might be a good time to start practicing mindfulness and meditation. These practices can help you to stay grounded and in a good space.

A good place to begin is with a simple breathing exercise:

1. Place your right palm on your heart and your left palm on your stomach
2. Breathe in for four counts
3. Hold it for four counts and then breathe out for four
4. Repeat the exercise as necessary

03 Keep a journal

Take time every day to be alone. Write down your thoughts. Often just the process of writing is therapeutic.

Include in your journal not just your daily goals, but also what you are grateful for. No matter how little you feel you have, there is always something to be grateful for.

04 Create a warm, pleasing environment around you

Create an environment that is good for your senses, by improving the sounds, scents and sights of your immediate spaces. Play soft, natural, relaxing music in the background as you work, or opt for music that gives you energy.

Start a garden and enjoy seeing green things develop under your fingers. Take regular breaks while you work. Enjoy a daily cup of herbal tea, and if you have a garden, take a walk each day.

05 Get enough sleep

Sleep plays an important part in the maintenance of your immune system, because when we sleep, the body is producing cytokines that are needed to fight infection. Make sure you get an adequate amount of good quality, deep sleep. If you're struggling, the following tips may help:

• Follow a relaxed routine the hour before bed. Start to turn off bright lights and avoid screens during that hour at the least. Take a warm bath or shower before going to bed and wear comfortable pajamas.
• Read a book or play some relaxing music to get your mind relaxed.
• Avoid alcohol, sugar or caffeine the last three hours before bed, as this can spike your energy levels and make it harder to fall asleep.
• If you have any concerns or anxieties that prevent you from sleeping, try to write them down on paper.

06 Make sure you stick to a regular routine

No matter that one day seems to blur into the next day, routine is really important while sheltering.

Try to stick to a regular routine, with a set time to get up and go to bed. According to the National Sleep Foundation, the aim for adults is to get between 7-9 hours of sleep a night.

07 Move your body

Just because you can no longer go to the gym, doesn't mean you should neglect your fitness. Staying active is vital to your health and can also help to manage your stress levels during lockdown. This is because exercise causes the release of endorphins, the happy hormones we desperately need right now.

Even if you're spatially challenged at home, you can stream free exercise classes on Facebook and YouTube that don't need too much space.

Many fitness apps provide access to free workouts or at least a few free weeks before you'll be charged, many of which have seen a massive jump in the downloads of their apps since international lockdown took place.

Take advantage of the variety available to you and try different classes so your body can benefit in different ways.

If you cannot access these, then simply doing household chores daily, or dancing to your favourite music for 20 minutes each day will also ensure you get a good dose of exercise. Importantly find something you love. You will do it more then.

This is the time when you want to build an immune system that can fight disease, not break it down with junk food. Make sure to include nutritious meals on a daily basis, and when you shop, opt for fresh produce, and look for different fruits and vegetables, lean protein, nuts and seeds.

Use the time to your advantage by preparing fresh meals daily. Plan meals for each day and try to include new recipes you haven't tried before. Make the meals simple, tasty and nutritious. Stay away from sugar and alcohol as far as possible, as these two can compromise your immune system.

In addition, try to get some sunshine, as this can help to build your resistance to certain diseases, better absorb nutrients, and grow bones. Always be sure to protect yourself during the hotter hours of the day with a hat and protective clothing.

The bottom line

Lockdown, sheltering or self-isolation, is challenging. But with the right attitude and setting of goals, you can improve your health and outlook on life beyond this challenging time.

If you or your loved one needs support during this time, reach out to your ICAS EHWP via your toll-free number or the ICAS On-the-Go App to seek counselling support.

Source: HealthCloud

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