

11 WAYS TO STAY POSITIVE IN ISOLATION

Staying at home presents many challenges, not least of all the capacity to stay positive. Here are some ways to help.

It's fair to say we are living through unprecedented times. Nothing like this has happened in living memory and, not only are the effects of Coronavirus life-style changing but no one knows how long the lockdowns and self-isolation requirements are going to last.

We may not all have tamborines at the ready and be able to conjure up an uplifting impromptu balcony concert but here are some ideas and tips on how to keep a positive mental attitude during these challenging times.

1. Personal (virtual) contact – If you're not socially and digitally connected, now is as good a time as any to give it a go. Whether it's passively on platforms like Facebook, to actively engaging with your local community on forums such as Nextdoor, creating social groups on whatsapp or even catching up with friends through the joys of Skype and Facetime – we are social beings at heart and keeping up even the merest connections will be key to keeping up your mental wellbeing.
2. Short term goals – one effective way to beat frustration is to self-impose short term goals that can provide you with a sense of achievement – so whether that's a goal for each day, or a longer term goal, or both, this will help you to manage the time and break it into manageable mental chunks.
3. Give something back – somehow. It will be natural to indulge in a little self-pity over the coming months, whether it's missed opportunities, hardship brought on by the situation or just feeling resentful at being cooped up for such an extended period. By helping others we can shift the focus from ourselves onto other people who may need help more than ourselves. Whether it's helping out locally by making some food for vulnerable people, creating a home-based charity event to raise money for something close to your heart.
4. Learn something – as we keep being reminded we are in this for the long haul. Setting goals and personal challenges can provide a key focus for us, whether that's learning to sew, to knit, an instrument, a language or taking an online course, these can all give us a sense of achievement and satisfaction that will help mitigate the frustration of isolation.
5. Read, read, read – whether you get a new subscription to a magazine or create a list of books you've always meant to read – this is the time. Don't underestimate the power of a good book to whisk one away from the present and into worlds of wonder, excitement, romance, thrillers – or whatever you fancy.
6. DIY and house-maintenance – Let's face it we're housebound, we might as well make the most of being stuck at home, so go through those drawers and declutter those wardrobes, spring clean those cupboards, do some gardening – it will all help to provide a sense of achievement.
7. While we're on projects – why not start a new one. What about writing that book you always had in your head, or starting a podcast or painting that portrait. Many of us will have felt overwhelm at a lack of time to pursue our hobbies and creative outlets –well now is the time to start.
8. Family – now this is a tricky one as I know many parents will be dreading the prospect of endless incarceration with our offspring – and potentially with partners. It's actually quite natural so try and offset the trickier times of living in such close

proximity with each other by creating good times together – whether that’s by playing a nightly board game, exercising as a family, cooking for each other or even sharing watching a box set together.

9. Ah yes, the box sets – our whatsapps are wild with boxset recommendations. This may be the time to upgrade your TV package or just invest in a few box sets that everyone can indulge in and enjoy.
10. Sleep – we can’t go out, so we might as well catch up on some ZZZs. It sounds glib, but maintaining a healthy lifestyle – by eating healthily, drinking lots of liquid (water not gin) and getting a good solid rest, will not only help you stay positive but also help battle the bug.
11. Perspective - Remember the phrase “and this too shall pass” – everything, repeat everything, is a phase. This is clearly going to be a very tough few months for many people, devastating even for those of us who lose loved ones, and while nothing can reduce the impact of this virus, it may help to try and keep it in perspective that this will not become the new norm. This extreme situation will end at some point and life as we know it will return.

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