



ASSOCIATION DES
MÉDECINS PSYCHIATRES
DU QUÉBEC

COVID-19



TIPS

for maintaining your mental
health during your quarantine

Understand that stress reactions can vary.

DEPENDING ON ONE'S VULNERABILITY AND THE TIMING OF EVENTS, ONE MAY EXPERIENCE

- Anxiety, rumination, panic.
- Confusion and difficulty concentrating.
- Tendency to overanalyse and question too much.
- Irritability.
- Disturbed sleep and appetite, eating too much, sleeping too little.
- Bravado, denial.
- Multiple areas of loss and mourning (job cessation or loss, social withdrawal, loss of leisure activities).

Remember to show empathy and patience for your loved ones who may react differently than you.

REGULATE EXPOSURE TO TRADITIONAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA BY LIMITING COVID-19 CONTENT TO A MAXIMUM OF TWO HOURS PER DAY.

- It's important to have accurate information in order to protect yourself adequately. Receiving too much information is neither necessary nor beneficial.
- When a threat is uncertain, it's normal and even healthy to seek information. But overexposure to the news amplifies the sense of threat, becomes a waste of time, and can even paralyze and prevent necessary protective behaviours and reduce self-efficacy in the otherwise normal demands of everyday life.

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SLEEP YOUR REQUIRED NUMBER OF HOURS.

- Each person has an ideal number of hours of sleep that varies between seven and nine. Make sure you go to bed early enough to have enough hours to rest.
- If you have difficulty falling asleep, plan to stay go to bed 30 minutes earlier.
- Stop reading about COVID-19, and stay away from screens an hour or more before going to bed.
- Listen to a podcast or audiobook to take your mind off things.
- Do a progressive relaxation exercise where you focus on relaxing each part of your body in sequence starting from your feet and making your way up to your head.
- If your mind keeps wandering, count backwards from 1000 as you visualize each number.

MAINTAIN A PHYSICAL ACTIVITY APPROPRIATE TO YOUR PHYSICAL CONDITION (WALKING, RUNNING, YOGA, RELAXATION EXERCISES) FOR AT LEAST 30 MINUTES A DAY.

- The closure of arenas, swimming pools, gyms and sports centres leads to various losses of protective factors for mental health: physical activity, face-to-face contact with others, and the practice of pleasurable activities.
- Try to compensate for these losses in creative ways: exercise in the living room, go jogging outside on your own, use the stairs of your house as a Stairmaster.

EXPLORE NEW LEISURE ACTIVITIES. LEARN TO SING, TO COOK, TO DRAW, TO DANCE, DISCOVER ANOTHER LANGUAGE...

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH FRIENDS.

- Use your phone to make calls instead of texting.
- Make group chats (ask your children how to do it).
- Show your grandparents how to use Facetime, Skype or WhatsApp.

PERFORM ACTIVITIES THAT PROVIDE A SENSE OF MASTERY.

- Shower and groom every morning.
- Make your bed.
- Do your dishes.



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TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR TIME SPENT AT HOME TO DO PROJECTS THAT HAVE BEEN PUT OFF.

- Reorganize the Tupperware drawer.
- Find your mismatched socks.
- Repaint your daughter's room.
- Go through your son's clothes to remove those he has outgrown.
- Cook meals that you can freeze.

ALLOW YOURSELF SOME TIME ALONE.

- Rarely does a family spend so much time together these days, and even the most united couples can get on each other's nerves when they are in constant contact. Allow yourself moments, either inside the house or by taking a walk and getting a breath of fresh air.

IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN AT HOME:

- Create a routine for them.
- Make a chart that everyone can see: snacks, activities with parents, times when parents have to work.
- Make sure to incorporate time for recess: go outside, get some fresh air, and get moving.
- See the page: how to talk to children.

PRACTICE THIS SIMPLE EXERCISE: BEFORE GOING TO BED, WRITE DOWN THREE GOOD THINGS THAT HAPPENED DURING THE DAY.

- This simple exercise has been effective against burnout in healthcare professionals.
- It serves to retrain the brain, which naturally tends to notice threats and the negative rather than the peaceful and positive.

STOP FOCUSING ON YOUR LOSSES DUE TO THE PANDEMIC. INSTEAD, CONSIDER WHAT YOU CAN LEARN, EXPLORE AND GAIN FROM THIS IMPOSED CHANGE OF PACE.

BEWARE OF CATASTROPHIC LANGUAGE.

- The words we use can exacerbate emotions. "It's interesting" or "it's strange" have less of an anxious impact than "it's horrible" or "it's awful."

ALLOW YOURSELF TO LAUGH. HUMOUR IS A NATURAL DEFENCE

- Share jokes: humour is always funnier when it's shared (hence the laugh track used in comedies on TV). Laughter is contagious.

