

## **DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT LIFE**

### **Student Counselling and Development Division**

#### **LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 TIME**

The outbreak of the Coronavirus shocked our society immensely. It is a very stressful and strange time for all of us. With the focus on our physical health, we tend to forget that our mental health is also at risk of suffering during this time.

The following tips will help you to look after your mental health.

##### **1. Managing your social media while staying connected**

Stay connected and maintain your social networks. Our health authorities have recommended that we limit our physical social contact to contain the outbreak, thus try to stay connected via e-mail, social media, video conference and telephone. However, do not over indulge in social media.

##### **2. Getting to your own emotions**

It is normal to feel worried, anxious, sad and confused during this very uncertain time. Now you have time, in abundance, to have that coffee with yourself, start that journal again, and get to know yourself. Looking after your emotions starts with recognising them, and then writing them down. This is a constructive coping mechanism to feel a bit lighter.

Meditation or mindfulness exercise is a good way to unwind. Find that kid inside yourself and set time aside for mindfulness exercises like cloud-watching or stargazing.

##### **3. Staying physically fit will help your mental health**

Yoga or Pilates is a great stress relieving tool. Or any exercise that you enjoy. Find a few at-home videos online to help you get started, either if it is Pilates, Hip Hop dance videos, strengthening, or just getting that heart rate up.

Starting off? Try these Yoga and Pilates videos:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uC2Q6KynZi8>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g13nVd7OLYs>

A Pro? Try these Yoga and Pilates videos:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKuJ8KJ2uC4>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5DEn1YHK0Q>

Looking for a cardio workout to get that heartbeat up:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ml6cT4AZdql>

#### **4. Curbing the fear – be aware of the overwhelming news we are bombarded with**

A near-constant stream of news reports about COVID-19 can cause you to feel anxious or distressed. Seek information updates and practical guidance at specific times during the day from health professionals and avoid listening to or following rumours that make you feel uncomfortable. Make sure you gather facts from reliable resources like the WHO (World Health Organization) which is leading the handling of this pandemic globally.

Please check out on the NWU website the [video by the WHO Director on Ways to Stay Healthy](#).

#### **5. Keeping up with your routine – even during this chaos**

**Sleep:** sleep enough, not too much, not too little. Go to bed at the same time every day and wake up the same time every day. Sleeping-in may sound like a good idea, but in the long run it may make you feel groggy and less motivated. Beware: afternoon naps could make you experience insomnia.

**Cleaning:** keep up with the daily chores, don't lag behind on the dishes.

**Eating healthy and drinking enough water** is good for our physical health, but it also helps us to feel better.

Catching up with your **academic work:** this may be a great time to catch up with academic work, using the various resources at your disposal, including online platforms such as eFundi.

#### **6. Be aware of the substance use increase**

Boredom could be the evil root of wanting to drink just one more beer/cider/whisky, and smoke one more cigarette...and one more... and one more...

Make sure you curb the boredom with constructive alternatives, like interesting online courses that you never had time for (e.g., learning sign language – to get you started <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1desDduz5M> ), read that book that has been staring at you, get to family time and dust off a few old board games to enjoy with the family.

#### **7. Looking for the positives**

Amazing people with amazing stories tend to arise in times of chaos. Also focus on these instead of the overwhelming guts and gloom.

Nature is flourishing in areas where air pollution has decreased due to isolation restrictions. Take time to also find these wonder stories and pictures.

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\*For more information visit: <https://www.who.int/>