

Self-Care and Self-Improvement Activities During Quarantine

Since the pandemic started, navigating through the year has been a constant uphill battle.

Coronavirus cases remain on the rise. Quarantine restrictions change now and then. Travel plans are postponed or canceled. On top of all those things, we are still stuck indoors, not knowing whether we can ever go back to how things were.

All these changes have taken a toll on our mental health¹. Because of this, we are prompted to shift our priorities and focus on what really matters: our well-being.

As the months pass by, more and more people are putting their well-being front and center. We are now turning to self-care and self-improvement activities as a way of keeping ourselves sane at this time of uncertainty. The good news is, these activities don't require too many resources and are obtainable even in the comfort of our homes.

In the previous article, we talked you through four self-care practices to achieve work-life balance. Now, let's put emphasis on the self-care activities that you can do when you finally give yourself some time off work:

Eat well. It's easy to indulge in salty, sweet, and high-fat foods to relieve stress and anxiety amid a crisis. Although our comfort foods tend to make us feel better, they don't often have much nutritional value².

Instead of feasting on comfort foods or ditching them altogether, be a mindful eater and consume them only in moderation. Fill up your plate with a variety of healthy foods, such as fruits, vegetables, meats, and whole grains³. A healthy diet boosts your immune system and prepares your body to fight against infections and diseases⁴.

Need some healthy and budget-friendly meal ideas? [Yummy.ph](#) and [Mama's Guide Recipes](#) got you covered.

Stand up and stretch. Regular physical activities can boost energy and improve overall well-being⁵. But now that we spend most of our days at home, exercising can be a challenge.

During your short breaks, make it a habit to spend at least three minutes of stretching and walking. Even these light intensity movements can improve blood circulation and muscle activity⁶. With the help of fitness apps, like [Nike Training Club](#), you can also adopt a workout routine that you can do indoors.

Take a social media break. Social media is a useful means to connect with our loved ones and stay informed of what's happening around the world. If it already affects your mental health negatively, however, it's time to stay off the screen⁷.

¹<https://www.who.int/westernpacific/news/feature-stories/detail/investing-in-mental-health-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

²<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/comfort-food-without-the-guilt#:~:text=Comfort%20food%20consequences&text=Eating%20too%20much%20saturated%20fat,and%20%E2%80%94%20of%20course%20%E2%80%94%20sugar.>

³[https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/index.html#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Dietary%20Guidelines,\(sodium\)%2C%20and%20added%20sugars](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/index.html#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Dietary%20Guidelines,(sodium)%2C%20and%20added%20sugars)

⁴<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/nutrition-and-immunity/>

⁵<https://www.norwalkhospital.org/newsroom/article-listing/adults-exercise-and-covid19>

⁶<https://www.who.int/news-room/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-coronavirus/healthyathome/healthyathome---physical-activity>

⁷<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/social-media-and-mental-health.htm>

If it's too extreme a step to uninstall all your social media apps, set a specific time of the day for browsing instead. You can also turn off social media notifications to lessen the urge of checking your phone.

Start journaling. Journaling is a quick pick-me-up activity that requires only two things: a pen and paper.

When you are overwhelmed with stress, don't let it take up too much space in your head. Organize your thoughts. Write them down. Process the words written on the paper. This method is proven to lower stress levels and can instantly improve your mood⁸.

Learn a new skill. Ever wanted to learn how to paint or build DIY projects but never had the time to do so before the pandemic? Well, now is a good time to roll up your sleeves and make your quarantine days worthwhile.

Whether you'd like to learn creative skills, like playing the guitar, or something more methodical, like managing your finances, there are many resources on the Internet that can help you reach your goals.

Fuel your curiosity. Educate yourself about topics that interest you. If you like listening to podcasts, there is a wide array of topics spanning technology, sports, pop culture, science, politics, and more in podcast platforms, like [NPR Podcasts](#).

If you are more of a visual learner, you can check out [Crash Course](#) and [Kurzgesagt](#) for interesting topics explained in visually appealing animations.

Unleash the gamer in you. A recent Oxford study revealed that the social connection and competence that are reinforced in playing video games have positive impacts on a player's well-being⁹. Gaming can strengthen bonds and friendships if you play along with friends.

However, it is still important to practice responsible gaming. While gaming has benefits, it is still not advisable to sit down and stare at digital screens for hours on end.

Catch up with friends and family. As we settle into a new normal, nourishing our social relationships should also be a habit we must maintain¹⁰. To stay connected, set a specific time every once in a while to check on your friends. You can also set a family night with the household where you play board games or watch movies together.

Breathe in, breathe out. Deep breathing can stabilize the body's stress response and disengage distracting thoughts and sensations¹¹. When stress and anxiety affect your sleep and impair your ability to perform tasks at work, find a quiet place, and perform deep breathing exercises, like yoga and meditation. You can use apps, like [Headspace](#), to guide you through the basics of meditation.

Everyone reacts to stressful situations differently. No matter which situation you find yourself in, remember that in all forms that it takes, self-care truly matters. While taking care of yourself won't fix the crisis we're in now, it will equip you with the right frame of mind to face whatever lies ahead.

⁸https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_journaling_can_help_you_in_hard_times

⁹<https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/arts-blog/gaming-may-not-be-bad-you-think-oxford-research>

¹⁰<https://adf.org.au/insights/staying-connected-covid-19/>

¹¹<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/relaxation-techniques-breath-control-helps-quell-errant-stress-response>