

### Well-being Tips for Turbulent Times

Positive psychology is the science of subjective well-being - what makes a healthy, good life. Below find evidence-based support for well-being actions to help you flourish through current times whether you are a parent, professional working from home, or young adult.

Know that we are not licensed therapists, clinicians, or medical professionals. Please continue to heed the recommendations of your local authorities. We are simply diverse humans united around the same belief that **what is right about us, what is good about people** can be taught, cultivated, and shared for the **ultimate thriving of all**. Tips are:

- Easy to do with little to no extra material, effort, or interaction with large gathering or public spaces.
- Personally experienced.
- Based on evidence-based research about cultivating well-being.

#### Evidence-based Tips:

- General Audience
- Working from Home
- Young Adults (undergrads facing campus exits)
- Parents (kids learning from home)
- Active Seniors
- Singles living alone
- Self-Employed

#### Personal/Popular Suggestions

#### References

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#### Evidence-based Tips:

##### General Audience

1. **Set goals.** This is a marathon, not a sprint. Goals are the pathways to a thriving life. Consider reasonable and feasible goals, what obstacles are in the way, and what can you do about it. Such *if-then* planning improves goal attainment and motivation. (Locke, 1996; Oettingen, 2014)

2. **Unfreeze and keep moving** - jumping jacks, dancing at home, burpees, spring cleaning! Exercise activates good neurochemicals in the brain to help creativity, learning, and manage stress. Move with others and you generate positive resonance and collective joy (Ehrenreich, 2006; Faulkner, G., Hefferon & Mutrie, 2015; Fredrickson, 2009; Haidt et al., 2008; Ratey, 2008; Ratey & Manning, 2014).
3. **Deep breathing.** As little as 3 minutes of deep belly breathing can help calm the body's stress response (Baime, 2019). Try [meditation recordings from the Penn Program for Mindfulness](#).
4. **Connect with nature.** Days are longer and warmer in the northern hemisphere. As simple as having a plant to look at has been shown to improve healing, calm, and feelings of positivity. If you can go to a park or hike, even better. Biophilia is an evolutionary need. (Ratey, 2008; Ratey & Manning, 2014)
5. **Digital detox.** Be intentional of the news you watch, hear and read, turn off email notifications, and focus on uplifting content. (Turkle, 2016)
6. **Listen to music.** Sonya Lyubomirsky (key researcher in the field of happiness) created this [Well-Being Playlist](#) (can be found on Spotify or Apple Music) to boost good feelings. (Lyubomirsky, 2007; Westgate & Oishi, n.d.; Tay, Pawelski, & Keith, 2018)
7. **Reach out positively (and virtually!).** Phone or email everyone (for good, not to spread panic). Loneliness is at epidemic levels and social distancing is not helping. Humans are ultra-social creatures and we all need to connect and happiness has a network effect. (Carver et al., 2009; Fowler & Christakis, 2008; Haidt et al., 2008; Lyubomirsky, 2007; Reivich & Shatté, 2002)
  - a. Ask for help - don't go it alone.
  - b. Check in on the especially vulnerable (virtually!)- elderly, those with compromised immune systems, lower income workers without paid sick leave, caregivers and caretakers (parents, nurses, doctors, nannies, homecare providers).
  - c. With a buddy every day for 7 days, ask: What will you be grateful for? What will you be proud of? What are you excited about?
8. **Change negative thinking habits.** Recognize negative thinking and ask yourself if this is helpful or unhelpful? Change thoughts in the moment by asking: *what is in my control? That's not true because... A more positive perspective is...* (Reivich & Shatté, 2002)
9. **Increase positive emotion.** Watch a [comedy or other positive movie](#), savor family photos, read old letters. Do what works for you to boost good feelings. Positive emotion has an undoing effect on negative feelings. (Fredrickson, 2009; Seligman, 1998/2011)

10. **Boost self-determination, not helplessness.** Focus on what we can control, what's going well, and how we can relate to one another. For example, great hygiene, stay at home, choose reliable news resources, and prosocial activities like reaching out. (Brown & Ryan, 2015; Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008; Seligman, 1998/2011)
11. **Practice empathy.** Active constructive responding increases mutual trust and positive emotion (Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011). Inquire about people's lives - be curious about their children, pets, hobbies, good news, etc. There's still a lot of good happening too!
12. **Find an excuse to play.** For kids (and possibly for adults) non-utilitarian and varied play - hide and go seek, board games - can promote reasoning, curiosity, creativity, and persistence (Lee et al., 2012; Mackey et al., 2011; 2017).
13. **Satisfice.** Don't let perfect get in the way of good. (Schwartz, 2004)
14. **Take a Virtual Museum Tour.** Experiencing art can be a pathway to well-being. These 12 major museums offer a virtual tour you can take right from your couch ([Click Here for the Article](#)). (de Botton & Armstrong, 2013; Lyubomirsky, 2007; Westgate & Oishi, n.d.; Tay, Pawelski, & Keith, 2018;)

### Working from Home

1. **Prime, Anchor, Frame the positive of virtual.** Priming with positive emotion increases innovation and creativity (Fredrickson, 2009; Schwartz, 2004).
  - a. Less cars on the road mean clearer air and time back to spend wisely.
  - b. Staying at home allows our nurses and doctors to do their jobs better.
  - c. Flexibility allows you the chance to rebalance.
  - d. Kick-off meetings by sharing one good thing, one positive emotion.
  - e. Ask what do we want to enable (rather than what do we want to fix)?
2. **Cultivate team strengths.** Take the [FREE VIA Character Strengths Survey](#) and talk about what's great about each other. Lean on each other's signature strengths to navigate this time together. Take it further and create a Team Strengths Tree. (Ryan, 2018; Niemiec & McGrath, 2019)

### Young Adults (undergrads facing campus exits)

1. **Schedule time with your friends and classmates.** It can be devastating to have to leave without saying goodbye to your friends on campus. Make sure to connect with your

friends and loved ones. Spend time with them, however you can - through texting, Facetime, Whatsapp, Skype, or even good old-fashioned letter-writing. Happiness can have a network effect. (Carver et al., 2009; Fowler & Christakis, 2008; Haidt et al., 2008; Lyubomirsky, 2007; Reivich & Shatté, 2002)

2. **Make time for yourself.** This is a difficult, confusing time, and we're all experiencing lots of changes. Whether you're back at home or still on campus, make sure you are taking care of yourself. Get sleep, eat well, spend time with a hobby you love, and treat yourself with kindness. (Baime, 2019; Lyubomirsky, 2007; Ratey, 2008; Ratey & Manning, 2014)

### Parents (kids learning from home)

1. **Go analog.** Organize a family game night, puzzle time, or craft time. Practice your family TikTok videos and blend movement with group play. (Ratey, 2008; Ratey & Manning, 2014; Turkle, 2016)
2. **Recognize Family Strengths.** Take the [FREE VIA Character Strengths Survey](#) for *Adults and Youth*, and talk about what's great about each other. Take it further and create a Family Strengths Tree. (Ryan, 2018; Niemiec & McGrath, 2019)

### Active Seniors

1. **Please ask for help - don't go it alone.** Letting the people that care about you help gives them a chance to show they love you. Happiness can have a network effect. (Carver et al., 2009; Fowler & Christakis, 2008; Haidt et al., 2008; Lyubomirsky, 2007; Reivich & Shatté, 2002)
2. **Find excuses to move.** Research studies show more resilient immune systems in otherwise healthy older adults who exercise than those who do not. Novel movement also stimulates mental and physical resiliency. Do a yoga video. Go for a walk in uncrowded spaces. Dance around your living room. (Hefferon & Mutrie, 2015; Ratey, 2008; Ratey & Manning, 2014)

### Singles living alone

1. **Reach out to friends and loved ones. Virtual doesn't need to be alone.** One of the biggest challenges to working from home when you're living alone is social isolation. Use our current technologies to connect via video and create opportunities to combat loneliness. Happiness can have a network effect. (Carver et al., 2009; Fowler & Christakis, 2008; Haidt et al., 2008; Lyubomirsky, 2007; Reivich & Shatté, 2002)

## Personal/Popular Suggestions

### General Audience

1. **Increase virtual exercise.** *If you already own this equipment,* increase use. The social benefits of platforms like Peloton and Nordictrack may increase connectedness and encourage lasting physical activity (Ratey, 2008).

### Working from Home

1. **Set boundaries for focus and mental health.** Block time for yourself (not the kids, not laundry) to do what you need to center and focus.
2. **Cameras-on.** Seeing faces and smiles has a positive network effect and increases positive resonance (Huppert, Baylis, Keverne & Fredrickson, 2004). Positive emotions have a broaden and build effect on second order activities (the kids and laundry) and long term well-being (Fredrickson, 2009).
3. **Schedule virtual team lunches or social hours.** Again social distancing does not need to mean isolation. High quality connections foster respect, trust, and vitality.
4. **Stand while presenting.** Evoke positive energy with positive energy. An energetic presenter may cultivate more engagement.
5. **Engage with video technology features.** Use chat, emojis, gifs, and “like” features to connect, boost meeting engagement, and play. ‘Liking’ validates others (they matter) and sends a positive signal to participate. High quality connections foster respect, trust, vitality, and are task enabling.
6. **#Handraise.** Many virtual meeting platforms lack a hand raise feature. Use #handraise to signal without feeling like you are interrupting. Other people matter.

### Young Adults (undergrads facing campus exits)

1. **Ask your university for help.** Reach out to your financial aid office, faculty, and other students. There is likely a high volume of calls and emails, but your voice deserves to be heard - keep trying.



2. **Create and stick to a study schedule.** If your university is moving to online classes, put yourself in the best position to succeed. Online classes may seem easier, but they will likely require the same amount of work. Make sure you create a schedule to keep up with your classes - a daily routine will likely also help with your transition!
3. **Take advantage of deals.** If you must suddenly move from your campus and are faced with moving and storage costs, know that there are options. [Uhaul is offering 30-day free storage](#) for college students.
4. **Know your rights.** [If you are a college student with a federal work-study job whose campus has closed down due to COVID-19, you must still be paid.](#)

#### Parents (kids learning from home)

1. **Schedule virtual play dates, virtual birthday parties.**
2. **Turn on blue light filters.** Screen out blue light during virtual classes to prevent sleep disruptions. Kids need proper sleep for brain growth, learning, and creativity.

#### Singles living alone

1. **Stick to a routine.** Structure around wake-up and work time can help mimic 9-to-5 life, avoid traps like washing dishes and doing laundry, and keep yourself focused on goals. This supports your circadian rhythms as well as your mental health.
2. **Practice normal hygiene for yourself and your space.** It's easy to forget how much our environment impacts our mood. By continuing to care for your body and your space you reinforce the idea externally that you matter to yourself and others.

#### Self-Employed

1. **Keep professional connections warm.** Check-in on contacts and how they are faring. Add value by co-creating solutions for new, emergent work needs (tips for working from home or using video technology).
2. **Stick to a routine.** Structure around wake-up and work time can help mimic 9-to-5 life, avoid traps like washing dishes and doing laundry, and keep you focused on goals.
3. **Stay on top of taxes and expenses.** Focus on the benefit of working from home (deductions). Connect with a tax professional to optimize your filings.

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