



PROTECTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING QUARANTINE



As if a major worldwide health crisis were not enough to worry about, millions of Americans have been thrust into the unfamiliar – and in some cases, unwanted – work-from-home world. So much upheaval over such a short period is sure to take a toll on anyone’s psyche. Everyone will adjust differently to the Coronavirus quarantine, and some may find it more difficult than others to make the mental adjustment to hunkering down and maintaining social distance in the coming weeks or months.

Being cooped up but still expected to contribute to your company’s customer service, project implementation, and revenue-producing initiatives is bound to strain your mental health. On the other hand, work can provide a welcome respite from health worries, family obligations, and the steady stream of bad news on the nightly news. Metasys offers these tips to keep you from going stir crazy during the pandemic:

1

Establish your new normal

The current situation may become our new lifestyle for the foreseeable future, so the more consistency you can build into it, the faster you will adjust. Routine is your friend. It helps you stay balanced, not only regarding your work duties, but also your family responsibilities and your own physical and mental health. Your ritual should mimic your normal-times routine as closely as possible. Get up, shower, dress, put the coffee pot on, walk the dog, or do whatever you used to do before heading to the office.



2

Break the Monotony

Routine should not be rigid, however, in work or in life. Working from home likely will give you the opportunity to help with projects outside your normal responsibilities. Working with various departments will prevent your daily schedule from becoming a grind while also demonstrating to your employer that you are a team player.



3

Fill your day

Rather than treating work as yet another thing you have to worry about, consider it an anchor that keeps you from drifting out to sea. Compartmentalizing eight hours of work will help you get through one-third of your day. Add in a good night's sleep, quality time with family, and some mental and physical exertion, and there won't be room in your day or your brain for worry.



4

Limit unfulfilling screen time

Social media and the popular press are fine sources for keeping in touch with loved ones and taking our minds off our troubles. But at times like these, they also are often the bearers of bad news. Don't torture yourself by logging on for the latest dreary statistics every half hour.



5

Enjoy healthy comforts

Break up your workday with a light lunch, a leisurely stroll, or a moderate workout. These activities release endorphins and other healthy brain chemicals that brighten your outlook and refresh you for another round of productive, creative work. Needless to say, crutches like sugar, fat, tobacco, and alcohol are no substitute for healthy stress-fighting alternatives.



6

Separate Work from Life

Do not allow boredom to drive you to spend inordinate amounts of time at work. Work a little extra to beat a critical deadline if necessary, but most of the time you need to stop working when the workday is done. The ability to maintain work/life balance is one of the greatest benefits of working from home. Don't let a misplaced sense of duty or a desire to "prove yourself" drive you to overwork. It's a good idea to establish your work-from-home space, be it a real office, a coffee table, or a large closet. When the whistle blows, pack away your work files and leave your work self behind. Cross over into home and family life and recharge for the next workday.



7

Make time for face time

When feasible, conduct work conversations through videoconferencing. Seeing colleagues' faces reinforces the work atmosphere and establishes the social component to the job that is missing when you're not all in the same office anymore. Just as important, being able to look coworkers in the (virtual) eye serves as a catalyst for creativity, ideation, and collaboration.



8

Use your employer's resources

Your employer and coworkers are available to help you make decisions and avoid frustrations while working from home. The people who work in your firm's marketing department, for instance, can edit customer correspondence to ensure it adheres to the organization's brand standards and is free of embarrassing grammatical errors. IT employees can be instrumental in setting up your home office, by providing advice on which webcam, collaboration tools, and other hardware and software your team should use.



9

Recognize the signs of stress

Extended or frequent stressful episodes can cause temporary loss of vision and hearing, high blood pressure, heart problems, and other serious conditions. Signs of stress include trouble falling asleep, nightmares, backaches, and tension headaches. Loss of appetite, binge-eating, and nausea are common. More often, stress affects our emotions, leading to mood swings, irritability, loss of concentration, and poor judgment.

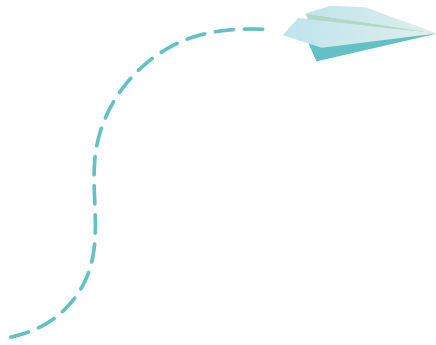


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Seek professional help

A certain amount of mental anguish is to be expected during the Coronavirus quarantine. Stress levels will rise, and anxiety is par for the course. But if you feel the strain is affecting your job performance or quality of life, reach out to a mental health professional. Stress may be a normal part of the workday, but when it leads to depression or other more serious conditions, your doctor may be able to prescribe medication or clinical treatments.





Studies of previous widespread disease outbreaks found that as many as [29 percent](#) of quarantined patients suffered post-traumatic stress disorder. People with preexisting mental or physical health conditions may be particularly vulnerable. Feelings of helplessness and loss of control during the pandemic exacerbate behavioral health problems. With more than half the American workplaces that offer employee health insurance including resources for treating mental health issues, help is at hand. Many employers have relaxed their sick leave policies to make it easier for workers to seek help when they feel physically ill or emotionally overwhelmed. Check with your human resources department for specifics on your employer's policy and a list of approved mental healthcare providers.