

The prospect of staying at home for any prolonged period of time can seem overwhelming and a little scary, especially if you're someone who enjoys keeping fit and active and hitting that daily step count. If you live alone, you may also be worried and stressed about feeling isolated. The trouble is with Covid-19, the timeline for managing this pandemic is not clear, which adds to the stress.

Rather than letting the isolation intimidate you, let's try and embrace it, maybe use it as an opportunity to do different things. This could be a home exercise programme or maybe just incorporating more simplistic healthy habits into your daily routine and mixing things up a little. Staying active in any form will be better for your mental and physical wellbeing - so working in the garden or tidying out that closet or garage (i.e. the things you never have the time to do) all count towards staying active at home. They will also add to a sense of satisfaction that could spur on a positive mood.

Here are some other strategies you can try.

1. STICK TO AN ACTIVE ROUTINE

While you may not be able to stick to your normal routine, you can create a new routine at home which includes alternative ways to keep active. As tempting as it may be to stay in bed and work in your PJs, in the long run this will have a detrimental effect on your overall mood.

TRY For example, getting up at the same time every day, doing a workout first thing (more on this to come), taking a shower and making a nice breakfast, if that order appeals to you. There are loads of studies supporting the benefits of routine



12 Practical Strategies for Surviving Lockdown



on positive mental health, and it's something that many of the mental health charities recommend for "staying grounded".

2. STRETCH IN THE LIVING ROOM

Whether you'd rather just have a bit of a stretch on your bedroom floor when you wake up or actually set aside half an hour or so every day to do a guided yoga routine - moderate stretching or yoga-style movement will help avoid stiff joints and maintain good blood circulation.

It's worth noting here that there are lots of different types of yoga to choose from, ranging from the more dynamic types, designed to build up a sweat, to the more steady Vinyasa flows, for those needing a stretch after sitting down all day.

TRY Search and find a simple short routine to start with, five or ten minutes. Follow a guided routine if you are unsure of what to do or ask a therapist or yogi friend for advice on which programmes are good for you.



3. TRY A HOME WORKOUT

We already know about the huge benefits of physical activity on boosting your immune system, general health, cardiovascular disease and weight control. But the endorphins (happy hormones) from exercise are also critical, particularly right now, for boosting self-esteem, improving mood, sleep, lowering stress, anxiety and depression.

Everywhere you look there are online apps and exercise programmes to follow at home. But take time to consider your age, and fitness level before diving into a heavy HIIT (high intensity interval training) session. You don't want to injure yourself. Or dig out an old DVD (if you still have a DVD player) and stick it on the television.

TRY If you are unsure ask your physical therapist or your massage therapist for advice.

Trust me, drop them an email and just ask for advice, they will enjoy hearing from you, as much as you will benefit from their input. Understandably it can be challenging with children at home too, demanding your time and attention. However, some routines are perfect to do as a family. If you haven't already come across Joe Wicks on YouTube, he does 20 minute routines aimed for children that can work for you too.

4. MAINTAIN HOBBIES THAT KEEP YOU MOVING

Where possible, maintaining hobbies is all part of keeping that connection with your 'normal' life and daily routine. Knitting for example is good for arthritis and keeping flexible movement in your hands and most products and supplies can still be bought online. Or try making organic cosmetics like lip balm, face cream, home-made deodorant and even candles.

Creating something can both lift your spirits and keep you busy. It can keep you in contact with friends or craft groups by setting tasks and discussing creations afterwards. Making your regular book club an online Skype or Zoom call may be fun



too, or just start a happy hour with your friends, or do an online pub quiz!

TRY Here are some more craft ideas:

- Embroidery
- Sewing
- Pickling
- Crocheting
- Making music
- Restoring furniture
- Model building
- Pottery
- Origami
- Candle making
- Flower pressing
- Baking
- Reading
- Writing
- Scrapbooking
- Photo album creation

You could even get an early start on your Christmas presents!

5. PRACTICE GENTLE LIFTING EXERCISES

The concept of creating makeshift weights at home can seem, well, daunting.

However strength training and some resistance is good to promote lean muscle mass (which increases your metabolism) and for women weight training stimulates an increase in bone mineral density protecting you from osteoporosis. Again, ask your physical therapist for guidance on safe exercises to do at home to strengthen your arms and legs.

6. UP YOUR BODYWEIGHT WORKOUTS

If the idea of lifting tin cans, flour bags and water bottles doesn't appeal to you, try getting creative with other bodyweight ways you can move inside. If you are physically able to squat comfortably, why not use the back of a stable dining chair for support? Practice your planks? Perfect your sit ups? Lunge in front of the TV? Incline press-up on the sofa? A push up?

Aim for 8-10 reps of each exercise

(a squat, lunge, sit up or holding a plank position) and repeat them 3-4 times with 2 minutes rest in between sets.

7. PRACTICE BASIC CIRCULATION PRINCIPLES

You don't need to go mad. If you're a little older, focus on making sure you're promoting basic circulation. Getting up from your chair or the couch at least every 30 minutes and flexing and rotating the lower legs while you're sitting, which is a very handy trick for maintaining blood circulation.

TRY Keep an eye on the time and take a stroll around your room every 30 minutes.

8. TAKE THE STAIRS

Take ten to fifteen minutes in the morning, at lunch and in the evening and walk a few flights of stairs, see how many you can do. If you need to, use the banister for support. This is not the time for accidents! Try incorporating a few stair stepping habits with regular activities like making a cup of tea or drinking a glass of water.

9. GET CREATIVE AND RECREATE YOUR WALKS

If you're someone who goes on regular walks with friends, why not FaceTime, Skype or Zoom those friends, or even just call them and have a conversation while marching on the spot. Social distancing doesn't mean not talking, it just means coming up with more creative ways to keep in touch. Sure, walking on the spot may sound mad, but in these circumstances it will not only get you moving, but will help keep your mental health in check as you're moving while connecting with others too.

TRY Book in a FaceTime 'walk date' with a family member or friend where you walk on the spot while catching up. Not as scenic as your usual walks, but guaranteed to leave you smiling nonetheless.

10. REMAIN IN TOUCH

Making an extra effort during this difficult time will not only keep everyone connected, but will help you not to feel as if you're losing touch with the outside world. Talking to others also helps to maintain cognition and prevent depression.



TRY This is especially important if you are likely to be isolated for a longer period of time. If you've got a grandparent or parent, make sure to check in with them regularly during the week.

11. KEEP THE MIND ACTIVE

Alongside staying physically active, keeping mentally active is vital, too. Watching quiz-based programmes will help you to keep your mind switched-on or challenge yourself to daily crosswords or sudoku.

TRY A recent Harvard study on cognitive fitness found that solving problems like sudoku, maths equations and word puzzles all helped to maintain mental positivity and sharpness.

12. LEARN TO MEDITATE

During times of stress, anxiety, and uncertainty it can be useful to practice breathwork or meditation to help manage your headspace. If you're not sure what breathwork or meditation really are, it's the practice of training the mind to a state of mental clarity that studies have found helps you deal with stress, alongside reducing levels of depression and anxiety.

TRY If you are unsure where to start, 'Headspace' is an online platform with an excellent app for your mobile phone.



However long this situation goes on for, let's try and use it as an opportunity to make positive changes to our lives that we can carry on with, when we emerge the other side.

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