

# A FEW TIPS FOR SURVIVING “SOCIAL DISTANCING” AND “SELF-ISOLATION”

(Without putting yourself or your family in the funny farm!)

Below is a small compilation of helpful tools as you navigate the next few weeks.  
Scroll thru to find something you can try.

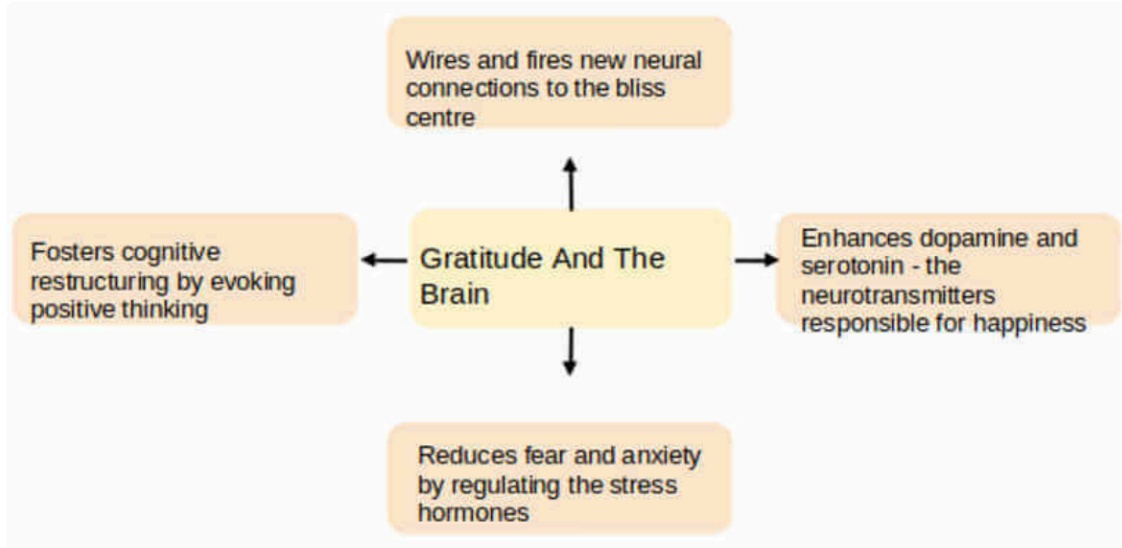
Please feel free to share additional ideas with me that have worked for you!

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## THE POWER OF GRATITUDE

Simply noticing the good things in your life is a great way to protect yourself against the negative. Acknowledging the positive can construct a buffer of “good” around you that makes it harder for the “bad” to get in.



- Don't rush to write down the first thing that comes to your mind. Take time to truly think about what you're grateful for. Expect each entry to take between 10-20 minutes.
- Writing (or meditating) about the people who you're grateful for tends to be more powerful than writing about things.
- Explain, in detail, why you're grateful. For example, if you're grateful for a friend who is nice, describe what they do that's nice, and why that makes you grateful.
- Aim for at least one entry every day. Keep your journal somewhere you'll see it, and plan when you can write. Set an alarm on your phone if you might forget. If you're not a writer, maybe take a moment over morning coffee or even while you brush your teeth to do this exercise in your head.

Example of what isn't effective: I have some good friends.

Example of what is effective: I am so thankful to have someone like Nicole in my life. She is always a ray of sunshine, has a megawatt smile that you can't help but feel when in her presence, she is generous and thoughtful. She is genuinely appreciative any time I try to do something nice back to her. She loves life and always tries to stay positive. She is real – she'll doesn't fake like everything is perfect but also doesn't dump all her problems on others either. She is affectionate and loves to give of herself to others.

Read more about the science behind gratitude and the brain:

[https://positivepsychology.com/neuroscience-of-gratitude/?utm\\_source=ActiveCampaign&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=%5BPP+Round-Up%5D+Navigating+Uncertainty+with+Positive+Psychology&utm\\_campaign=%5BPP+Round-Up%5D+Draft+24+March](https://positivepsychology.com/neuroscience-of-gratitude/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=%5BPP+Round-Up%5D+Navigating+Uncertainty+with+Positive+Psychology&utm_campaign=%5BPP+Round-Up%5D+Draft+24+March)

# MANAGE ANXIETY AND ISOLATION DURING QUARANTINE

By Dr. Aarti Gupta, PsyD

Many of us, even those who have not been infected by the virus, will choose to quarantine in our homes for the upcoming weeks. Here are a few pointers that could help you survive spiraling negative thoughts about this uncertain time.

## 1.) Reframe “I am stuck inside” to “I can finally focus on my home and myself”

As dismal as the world may feel right now, think of the mandated work-from-home policy as an opportunity to refocus your attention from the external to the internal. **Doing one productive thing per day can lead to a more positive attitude.** Set your sights on long-avoided tasks, reorganize, or create something you’ve always wanted to. Approaching this time with a mindset of feeling trapped or stuck will only stress you out more. This is your chance to slow down and focus on yourself.

## 2.) **Stay close to your normal routine**

Try and maintain some semblance of structure from the pre-quarantine days. As you work from home, it could be tempting to fall into a more lethargic lifestyle, which could lead to negative thinking. Wake up and go to bed around the same time, eat meals, shower, adapt your exercise regimen, and get out of your PJ’s. Do laundry on Sundays as usual. **Not only will sticking to your normal routine keep you active and less likely to spiral, it will be easier to readjust to the outside world when it’s time to get back to work.**

## 3.) Avoid obsessing over endless Coronavirus coverage

Freeing up your day from work or social obligations gives you plenty of time to obsess, and if you have a tendency to consult Google for every itch and sneeze, you may be over-researching the pandemic as well. Choosing only certain credible websites (who.int or cdc.gov is a good start) for a limited amount of time each day (perhaps two chunks of 30 minutes each) will be in your best interest during this time.

## 4.) A chaotic home can lead to a chaotic mind

With all the uncertainly happening outside your home, keep the inside organized, predictable and clean. Setting up mental zones for daily activities can be helpful to organize your day. For example, try not to eat in bed or work on the sofa- just as

before, eat at the kitchen table and work at your desk. Loosening these boundaries just muddles your routine and can make the day feel very long. Additionally, a cluttered home can cause you to become uneasy and claustrophobic of your environment- so keep it tidy.

5.) Start a new quarantine ritual

With this newfound time, why not **do something special during these quarantined days**? For example, perhaps you can start a daily journal to read something fiction for one hour per day. Or take a walk every day at 4pm, connect with your sister over FaceTime every morning, or start a watercolor painting which you can add to everyday. **Having something special during this time will help you look forward to each new day.**

## IDEAS TO WARD OFF DEPRESSION WHILE IN ISOLATION

One of the number one remedies clinicians advise for people with depression is to get out and do something, and even better, do something with someone! As if that isn't hard enough for someone in the thick of it, it's practically impossible right now. But take heart! There are options. It takes some creativity. If you're not the creative type, find someone who is! Here are some of my personal ideas, as well as a few links to ideas from others. Get out a calendar, and make a plan to do something enjoyable every single day, or at least every other day.

### **Do something nice for someone!**

Ask someone if you can pick something up for them at the grocery store. Send a real greeting card in the real mail! Write someone a letter that you haven't talked to in awhile. Make someone in your house breakfast in bed. Make a candlelight dinner with fancy paper plates 😊

Buy a **big puzzle** and lay it out over the dining table. Invite a friend over to help. Spend 20m a day on it. (Ellen DeGeneres chronicled her adventures on Instagram doing a giant puzzle, then gave up on it and switched over to Legos.)

### **Bake!**

Pick a couple days per week and bake a new recipe. I know you have a Pinterest board or a notebook full of recipes you've never tried. Make something you wouldn't normally – a healthy version of your favorite treat, or make some good old fashioned rock candy! If you're a good cook, challenge yourself to using just what's in your pantry.

### **Meet your neighbors.**

Leave a note on a neighbor's door (or knock if you're brave – ha ha) and invite them over for tea or coffee (make good use of that porch or patio!) Or, invite them to allow you to bring over a store-bought treat and coffee. Visit for 30 min and then go about your day. Even if you just say hello thru the open door and ask if you can bring over a treat that you made (see above!), you can put a smile on their face and yours!

### **Get outside!**

Go for a walk, but with purpose. Take pictures of (or just pay attention to) as many different types of \_\_\_ while out (types of plants, types of mailboxes, types of flags, door wreaths, dogs). Post the info on social media. Ask if others can name the types of plants/dogs, etc.

Get on your bike and explore a new route or a new neighborhood. Maybe downtown or somewhere near the water, and then take your time noticing the new environment.

Create a mini-golf course in your yard or nearby area. You are naturally pretty distant from others, and you get outside air. Be silly. Golf with your left hand instead of right. Place friendly bets on each hole.

### **Be active.**

Try a new hiking trail. I love the GTM across from Vilano Beach. (Check to see if the trail is open.) If there's nothing open, go to the neighborhood next to yours, or walk to a nearby coffee shop/restaurant for your to go order.

[https://www.yelp.com/search?cflt=hiking&find\\_loc=St.+Johns+County%2C+FL](https://www.yelp.com/search?cflt=hiking&find_loc=St.+Johns+County%2C+FL)

### **Create new experiences.**

Try out a new coffee shop in town (twice per week, or every day, whatever!) Get the same type item. Log your results and share! I recently discovered City Perks downtown and thought it devine (great baked goods, too). Same for Dos Coffee.

<https://www.visitstaugustine.com/article/coffee-hot-spots-st-augustine>

### **Connect with others:**

Websites like Zoom and apps like VSee let us meet in groups over the internet.

Do "happy hour" or set a dinner date with friends. Sit down and meet together as you normally would as if you were in person! You can even watch a movie together using FaceTime! Make it a regular date.

### **Learn something new:**

Many websites are providing online fitness classes, art classes, etc.

I joined Orange Theory recently, and so have been doing their daily workouts at home. You can check them out on Facebook for free.

One sites like MasterClass.com, you can access over 80 different entertaining and useful classes. Another is OutSchool.com

Other businesses offer a weekly meet up for free on facebook that can also be watched later. For example: [https://www.facebook.com/makepaducah/?hc\\_location=ufi](https://www.facebook.com/makepaducah/?hc_location=ufi)

### Two great websites with lots of ideas:

Print them out and highlight the ones you want to try. **Strive to do one every day.**

Be ADVENTUROUS!

1) Are you social distancing? 25 things you can do to keep yourself busy

<https://www.hellomagazine.com/healthandbeauty/health-and-fitness/2020031686372/things-to-do-if-self-isolating-at-home/>

2) 60 things to do during self-isolation

<https://allthingskoze.com/blogs/kozechronicles/60-things-to-do-during-self-isolation>

## EYE OF THE HURRICANE – A MEDITATION

Meditation techniques, however primitive in terms of their origin, are strangely appropriate and tailor-made for our current life that is busy and stressful. There are different schools of meditation and various types of practices accessible to us today, including:

- *Spiritual Meditation* – Which incorporates components of silence, prayers, and self-control, and aims to build a deeper connection to the Divine.
- *Mindfulness Meditation* – Which aims to expand happiness by enhancing self-knowledge and understanding.
- *Movement Meditation* – Which is a meditation involving physical movements such as walking, yoga, etc..
- *Focused Meditation* – Where we commit to paying undivided attention to an object or an imaginary light while meditating and learn how to calm the mind amidst the daily multitasking life.
- *Visualization Meditation* – Similar to guided imagery techniques, this form of meditation allows us to imagine a mind-soothing picture, for example, the open sky, or a serene river stream, and try to let our pent up emotions and negative thoughts wash away in the picturesque landscape.
- *Chanting Meditation* – Which includes repeating ‘Mantras’ or words linked to happiness, gratitude, self-love, compassion, and inner peace. Regular chanting of these phrases lets in positive energy into our lives and help us truly experience wellness at the very core.

There are regular [benefits of meditation](#), including awareness, mental peace, and focus, loving-kindness meditators enjoy added advantages of increased happiness, love, and affection.

Although there are no right or wrong ways of practicing meditation, as long as we are committed to unconditional love and self-appreciation, here are some requisites of practicing every day:

- Carve out some time from your daily schedule and commit to loving-kindness during those minutes every day. Even a small break at work would work fine.
- Start with yourself. Using yourself as the subject, show all your love and care to the self in the first few sessions. Repeat praise words and blessings like “*May I be well,*” “*May I be healthy,*” “*May I be at peace,*” etc., and try to notice what changes within you after each session.
- Set a timer for two minutes when you begin meditating. As you progress and get a firmer grasp of it, increase the time and practice accordingly. Having a timer in the first place prevents distractions or over-worrying about the minutes of training. When you utter the kind words to yourself, make sure you listen to yourself and internalize the meaning of the words. For example, try to imagine what it means to be at peace when you repeat the words ‘*May you be at peace,*’ or try to understand how safe you feel when you say the words ‘*May you be safe,*’ etc..
- After each meditation session, it is vital to spare a few minutes for recapitulating the experience. You can maintain a journal for recording how you felt before, after, and during the meditation session. Sharing the feelings helps in enhancing awareness about how the meditation helped you and provides enthusiasm to continue practicing in the future.



- Unless you feel comfortable with your body, your mind, and the environment where you are practicing, you cannot fully immerse into the meditative flow. Some comfort factors include:
  - Choosing the posture for meditating.
  - Regulating the amount of light that is in the room. A moderately illuminated place is preferable.
  - Minimizing the amount of noise around – less noise is ideal for any meditation session.
  - Wearing comfortable clothes – light and stretchy clothing can give you more comfort while sitting for long durations.
  - Preventing distractions – including TV, mobile phone, speaker, computer, or other gadgets. It is a good idea to keep them away during the meditation session.

Access the meditation “eye of the hurricane” here:

Access on Youtube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPFayxlm\\_ms](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPFayxlm_ms)

Download audiofile from dropbox:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/avf62fyukpwpenu/Audio%20-%20Eye%20of%20the%20Hurricane%20Meditation.mp3?dl=1>

## **GUIDED MEDITATIONS and MINDFULNESS**

The internet is flooded with guided meditations that will help you sleep, too.

Here are additional options – but ask your friends too!

From the Dartmouth Student Wellness Center:

<https://students.dartmouth.edu/wellness-center/wellness-mindfulness/relaxation-downloads/deep-breathing-guided-relaxation>

MIT Medical Sleep and Mindfulness Resources

<https://medical.mit.edu/community/sleep/resources>

## IT'S KIND OF AN EMERGENCY

The future is looking uncertain for everyone across the globe. Some days we will handle it better than others. Maybe you'll handle it fine, but you know someone who isn't. Please keep this info handy and share as needed.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is one resource that can be reached **24 hours a day**. 1-800-273-8255.

The HopeLine is available 24 hours a day Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. The line can be reached by phone or text: (919) 231-4525 or (877) 235-4525

IMAlive is a live online network that uses **instant messaging** to help those in crisis. It can be found at [www.imalive.org](http://www.imalive.org).

Residents can also reach out St. Johns Care Connect for local support and to get connected to local agencies who can help. They can be reached at 904-819-3070 or residents can fill out the online form at [www.stjohnscareconnect.com](http://www.stjohnscareconnect.com).

The United Way also provides local help with its 211 Community Helpline. It can be reached by calling 211 or 904-632-0600.

**Prayer warriors are at your service, anonymously if you'd like.**

Diocese of St. Augustine: <https://www.dosafl.com/request-a-prayer/>

The Joy FM radio station:

Get Prayer Right Now

Call or text [877-800-7729](tel:877-800-7729)

Connect with someone who will pray with you. Any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week