



COVID-19: 10 Things to Make Your Life Better

This COVID-19 crisis has radically changed our lives. Just a few months ago, we had no idea our 'world' would be confined to our homes!

This crisis is a powerful reminder of how important freedom is - and how much we need human connection!

Remember you are not alone. Because what is DIFFERENT here is that everyone is impacted! Your neighbour, mom, boss and friends as well as your counterparts around the world are all going through something similar.

So, it's important to remember:

*Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. **Viktor E. Frankl***

This is the challenge each of us must rise to! If we're going to be stuck at home, we may as well make the most of it.

Here Are 10 Things You Can do to Make Your Life Better while Physically Isolated:

1) Create a Healthy, Supportive Routine

When we feel powerless or helpless (as so many of us do at the moment), one EXTREMELY easy thing to do is to create a routine or schedule.

While we're all stuck in anxiously waiting at home, it's easy to lose our sense of time. Days can begin to blend into each other. A routine can give us an anchor and greater sense of control over our lives. And if you have children, creating a routine is especially important to give them a sense of normality.

This routine or schedule can be as simple as:

- **7am** - Wake-up
- **8am** - Breakfast
- **10am** - Exercise
- **11am** - Talk to friends
- **12.00pm** - Lunch
- **1-4pm** - Learning or a home project
- **5pm** - Make & Eat Dinner
- **7pm** - Talk to close family
- **8pm** - Reading, Journaling
- **10pm** - Bed

Be sure to include food preparation, social time, exercise and outdoor time and some learning or creativity so you get some *benefit* from this challenging time.

It's also important to recognize weekends because it's too easy for weeks to blur together. So, make a looser schedule for your weekends. For example, you could include:

- Sleeping in/later bedtime
- Brunch
- "Treats"
- Movie night with popcorn
- A virtual happy hour with friends or colleagues
- A larger project, perhaps some art, craft, gardening or home redecoration.

So, create a routine for a sense of control and mastery over your environment and life circumstances. Reclaim what power you can over your own life, because with all this uncertainty it's important for you - and especially important for children - to have predictability.

2) Build Your Physical Strength, Fitness Levels or Flexibility!

Building your physical strength is powerful and health-boosting! Not only is physical strength and flexibility life-affirming and good for our health, but feeling more *physically* powerful actually helps us feel more empowered and less helpless *in life* too!

So add some physical activity into your schedule - as little as 15 minutes daily. Maybe by the end of this you'll be fitter or even be able to do 10 (or 100!) press-ups!

There are many options to boost your physical strength and health. Here are some ideas:

- Take up a yoga practice - excellent for strength-building, flexibility - and calm! There are lots of online options. Here is one with everything from 10 minutes for beginners to an advanced practice. [Sarah Beth Yoga on Youtube](#) has more (free) yoga videos than I can count
- Learn do a press-up or push-up. Then see if you can get to 10 (or more - depending on where you start)!

- There are so many online fitness classes on YouTube - for beginners, experts - with equipment and also with no equipment whatsoever. [PopSugar Fitness](#) has many options to choose from.
- Try Tai Chi. Simple routines can be found on YouTube

REMEMBER: BEing stronger = FEELING stronger and more in control! And building your PHYSICAL strength or fitness = REDUCED feelings of helplessness!

3) Learn with Non-Fiction Books:

Use this time at home to educate yourself with *non-fiction* books. There is so much to be gained - like self-confidence, negotiation skills, health (sleep, nutrition), how to have difficult conversations and much more.

What keeps you up at night? There's probably a book about that! What do you wish you were better at? There's probably a book about that too!

Here are some book ideas to get you thinking:

- **Be more productive or creative** with "The Now Habit" by Neil Fiore or "A Whack on the Side of the Head (How You Can Be More Creative)" by Roger Von Oech and "A Whole New Mind" by Daniel Pink.
- **Think (or rethink?) how you live** with books like "The Omnivore's Dilemma" by Michael Pollan (also available in a young reader's version), "Slow Food: Collected Thoughts on Taste, Tradition, and the Honest Pleasures" by Carlo Petrini, "Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America" by Barbara Ehrenreich, "Doughnut Economics" by Kate Raworth.
- **Get personally inspired** with "Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts" and "The Gifts of Imperfection" by Brené Brown, or "Man's Search for Meaning" by Viktor E. Frankl.
- **Up-skill yourself** with "Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most" by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen.
- **Learn about the human mind** with "Blink" by Malcolm Gladwell or "The Whole Brain Child" by Daniel J. Siegel MD and Tina Payne Bryson, PhD.
- **Get healthier** with "Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams" by Matthew Walker PhD.
- **Be more confident and discover your strengths** with "The Confidence Code: The Science and Art of Self-Assurance - What Women Should Know" by Katty Kay and Claire Shipman" or "Now, Discover Your Strengths (How to Develop Your Talents and Those of the People You Manage)" by Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton.
- **Finally, read memoir!** Choose someone you admire, get inspired and learn how other people think - and live their lives.

Reading one book will expand your mind, reading several of these books is going to make you more interesting, help you learn new skills - and maybe even make you more employable too!

4) Gain a New Skill with Online Learning:

There are so many opportunities online to gain a new skill and they're growing by the day!

Grow your personal or creative skills or choose a new skill to learn and take back to work with online training providers like [Coursera](#) or [Udemy](#).

There are many other providers.

If there's a skill you always wanted to learn, search for it. But be sure to read the course descriptions thoroughly, check reviews if there are any - and check money-back guarantees as you need to!

And with so many learning options ranging from FREE to tens of dollars to the low hundreds of dollars, there will be something out there just perfect for you.

You can also simply search for something you'd like to learn how to do on YouTube.

5) Be in the moment:

In THIS moment you are OK. You are safe. Take one day at a time. One hour or even one breath at a time if you need to.

This tip is about being super-present, not thinking ahead or remembering the past, but practicing BEING.

This is a PRACTICE - meaning you will have to do it over and over again - bringing yourself back to the NOW. Over time it gets easier, and it's a great skill to have to take back to "normal" life.

So when you notice you're worrying, feeling twitchy and want to pick up your device and find out what the "latest" is about the COVID situation, say to yourself, "It's OK. In this moment, I am safe. In this moment I am OK." You can also add or say, "In this moment, my children/husband/family are safe."

EXTRA TIP: Reduce or minimise how often you watch and read the news! And DON'T read or watch the news (or articles about COVID-19 or similar) just before bed!

6) Laugh

Distracting ourselves from our fears is a valid technique for feeling better!

Laughter releases helpful chemicals in our bloodstream - Endorphins (our natural "happy" drug) and Dopamine (part of our bodily "reward" system).

- What are your favourite comedy shows?
- Is there a comedian you like?
- Netflix and similar have so many watching options, so find something that makes you laugh!

IMPORTANT: We should NOT use over-use laughter as a distraction technique. And it shouldn't be used for ongoing and persistent fears in regular life. But for a situation like this, where this isn't much that any of us can do other than sit and wait - distraction can be a great coping mechanism.

7) Start a Journal!

If you've always wanted to journal, now is a good time to start. More than just keeping a record of your day, a journal can help you explore and sift through your feelings and experiences and learn from them. It's a great way to get to know you.

It's great to choose a beautiful notebook, but the most important thing is to just get started. Here are some prompts to get started with:

- Today I am feeling _____. I think this is because _____.
- One big thing I have learned during this crisis is _____.
- I remember the last time I was stuck in the house _____.
- One thing that's surprised me recently is _____.
- What matters most to me in life is _____.
- Describe your ideal day _____.

"A journal is expressive by nature and it contains feelings, emotions, problems, ponderings and it is more reflective on the meaning of life being lived." **Lynda Monk**

You may find this [How to Journal article](#) from the IAJW (International Association for Journal Writing) helpful to get you started.

8) Help Others

Helping others is empowering *and* makes us feel better. Here are a few ways you could help others.

- Check in on a neighbour or friend and see if they need anything. You can do this by phone, or in person, remembering to maintain a 6 feet distance.
- Offer to get someone groceries if you're going.
- Help someone less technically savvy learn how to use Zoom or WhatsApp or whatever they need to get online.
- Host a virtual get-together with your regular friends.
- Reconnect more deeply with friends or relatives who have moved away.

9) De-Clutter

I bet you have some organizational things on your to-do list (like going through winter clothes, sorting out toys to donate or tidying the laundry closet, garage or shed) that have been on there for a while. Use this isolation period to get them done!

Getting organized and de-cluttering allows us to exert some control over our lives - and therefore feel less helpless! Plus it'll feel amazing just to have it done.

Organize your closets, your garage, your books, your photos, office, kitchen equipment. Whatever needs organizing. Or perhaps you need to go through your receipts or file your taxes!

- If you need some inspiration (and great clothes-folding tips) you could watch the Marie Kondo series on Netflix!

A simple 3 Step Method to go through your stuff:

1. If you're keeping it, be sure to DECIDE where it will "live" from now on.
 2. If you're not keeping it, create two piles:
 - Things to DUMP
 - Things to DONATE (and if relevant to pass on to specific people).
 3. When you're done, put each pile into bags or boxes, and then once this crisis is over you can get rid of what you no longer need.
- TIP: You don't need to do any of this 'in one sitting', do an hour a day - you'll be surprised how much you get done if you keep it up for a week!

10) Send "Real" Snail Mail Letters or Cards

Go old-fashioned. Who doesn't love to receive a lovely card or handwritten letter in the post box! Rediscover the lost art of letter-writing and make someone's day.

Yes, you could send an email appreciating someone, and that's great. But imagine your recipient's face as they pick up that *hand-written* card in the mailbox.

Wondering what to say? Write from the heart! Here are some ideas to get started:

- I really appreciate having you in my life because _____.
- I love hanging out with you when we _____.
- I've realised that you bring _____ to my life.

Wrap-up

So, which of the above ideas resonated with you? The areas I am focusing on are journaling, de-cluttering and sending cards to shut-ins and friends.

Believe you have the skills and power to tackle this situation and you will! Choose to make the best of a difficult situation and no matter what - you'll find a way.

This current and strange COVID-19 situation will end. And when it does, you'll be proud you made the effort to learn something - whether it's about yourself, fresh knowledge, a new skill - and who knows what else!