



Thriving in Challenging Times

12 TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR LIFE BETTER WHEN
ISOLATING

team^{of}
thinking ASIA



Remember that you are not alone

This COVID-19 pandemic has radically changed our lives. Just a few months ago, we had no idea that our 'world' would be confined to our homes. This is a powerful reminder of how important freedom is - and how much we need human connection. Remember that you are not alone.

What is DIFFERENT here is that everyone is impacted in some way. Your neighbour, family, work colleagues and friends as well as your counterparts around the world are all going through something similar.

This is the challenge each of us can rise to. If we're going to be stuck at home, we can make the most of it as best as possible.

Here are 12 things you can do to make your life better while physically isolated.

TIP 1

CREATE A HEALTHY,
SUPPORTIVE
ROUTINE

How's your routine?

When we feel powerless (as so many of us do at the moment), one easy thing to do is to make a schedule. This will help create some sense of control which is an essential thing that our brains crave to feel calm.

While we're all stuck in 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. If you have children, creating a routine is especially important to give them sense of normality.

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 some certainty and control.

If you're working from home, a routine or schedule can be as simple as:

Workdays...

7am - Wake-up

8am - Breakfast

9am - work begins

10.30am - Coffee

12pm - Lunch

1pm - Work

2.30pm - Coffee

5pm - Exercise

6pm - Make & Eat Dinner

7pm - Talk to friends or family

8pm - Reading, Journaling

10pm - Bed

What about weekends?

It's also important to recognise weekends because it's too easy for weeks to blur together. So, make a looser schedule for your weekends.

TIP 2

BUILD YOUR
PHYSICAL STRENGTH,
FITNESS LEVELS OR
FLEXIBILITY!

It's time to move!

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. It also produces feel good chemicals which can improve our emotional health.

So add some physical activity into your schedule - as little as 15 minutes daily. Maybe by the end of this you'll be fitter!

Remember to exercise at a safe level. Take it one step at a time.

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 free online options.
- Learn to do a press-up! Get that old skipping rope out! Anything that will get you moving!
- There are so many online fitness classes on Youtube - for beginners to experts - with equipment and also with no equipment whatsoever.



TIP 3

LEARN WITH NON-
FICTION BOOKS

Pick up a book...

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.

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.



TIP 4

GAIN A NEW SKILL
WITH ONLINE
LEARNING

Switch off Social Media Switch on 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.

If there's a skill you always wanted to learn, search for it. Be sure to read the course descriptions thoroughly and check reviews if there are any.

With so many learning options available, there will be something out there just perfect for you.



TIP 5

EXPLORE YOUR LIFE
VISION



Look to the future...

At the moment we are surrounded by the news. Rather than watching endless news streams, you can choose to focus on a bigger picture - your future.

What do you want from the rest of your life? What would you be disappointed you did NOT do? Where do you envision yourself in 10 years? Having a clear vision of how you want your life to be is a powerful motivator. A vision helps us work towards our goals, take action and make change. Soon, we'll all be super-busy again - and a vision might be just what you need to stay focused!

- What do you desire or yearn for in your life?
- How do you want to feel?
- What do you really, really want to be different in your life?
- What's your dream for this lifetime?

Don't limit yourself and your ideas because you don't believe something is likely. Instead believe it's possible - and even if you don't get all the way there, you may get close - or even find something better along the way.



TIP 6

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.

TIP 7

LAUGH

It's sometimes the best medicine...

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, YouTube and similar have so many 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.



TIP 8

CALM
YOURSELF



Relax yourself...

Our brain is hard wired to look for threats and right now, we are all experiencing some level of threat, so keeping calm is important.

Neuroscience research shows that as you label emotions, you dampen down the activation of your emotional brain. In other words, you can get more calm and focused. It might seem strange, but it works. So when you feel an emotion, label it with just one or two words. For example:

"I'm **stressed** right now"... "I'm feeling **angry**"..."I'm feeling **sad**"

Breathing can also help to calm you, so practice deep breathing techniques. The correct breathing can stimulate the vagus nerve, the longest nerve in your body, which connects your brain to many important organs. Stimulation of this can reduce stress and anxiety by activating the bodies "relaxation response".

Take a series of slow, deep breaths, (about 6 breaths a minute). You should breathe in deeply from your diaphragm and when you do, your stomach should expand outward.

TIP 9

START A JOURNAL

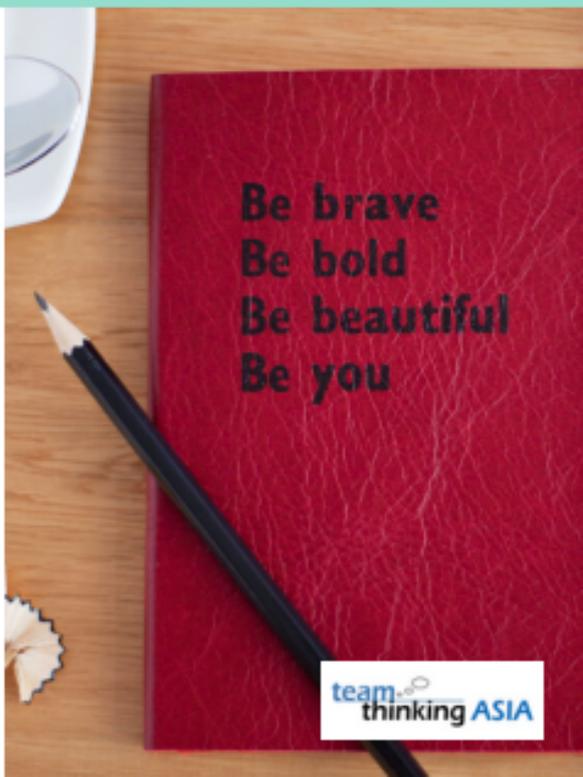
Get to know yourself...

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 yourself.

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

- One big thing I have learned during this time is...
- One thing that's surprised me recently is...
- What matters most to me in life is...
- My ideal day would be...

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



Be brave
Be bold
Be beautiful
Be you

TIP 10

BE KIND



Kindness is powerful...

Kindness and compassion are some of the most powerful tools any of us have in our toolbox right now. Many of us are largely housebound and unable to physically be with people as easily. So, of course we're going to feel strange sometimes.

- Use kindness to comfort yourself when afraid or feeling anxious or fidgety. Be gentle. Imagine you're soothing a friend or animal who is afraid - what would you say to them? Then say that to yourself.
- Be patient. Instead of getting upset when you see other people behaving badly remember that we all do silly things when we're anxious.
- Imagine you have a kind, wise self. A part of you that is unflappable, intelligent and unconditionally loves ALL of you. Now, when you need it, imagine that kind, wise self is with you, supporting you, maybe giving you a hug and saying exactly what you need to hear (not just the sugary stuff, but also the tough love and common sense).

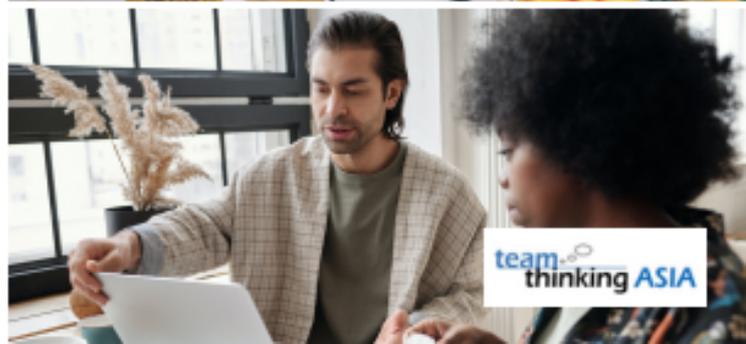
TIP 11

HELP OTHERS

Reach out...

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 if you are able to, remembering to maintain at least 2 metres distance.
- Offer to get someone shopping for them, if you're able to go outside safely.
- 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.



TIP 12

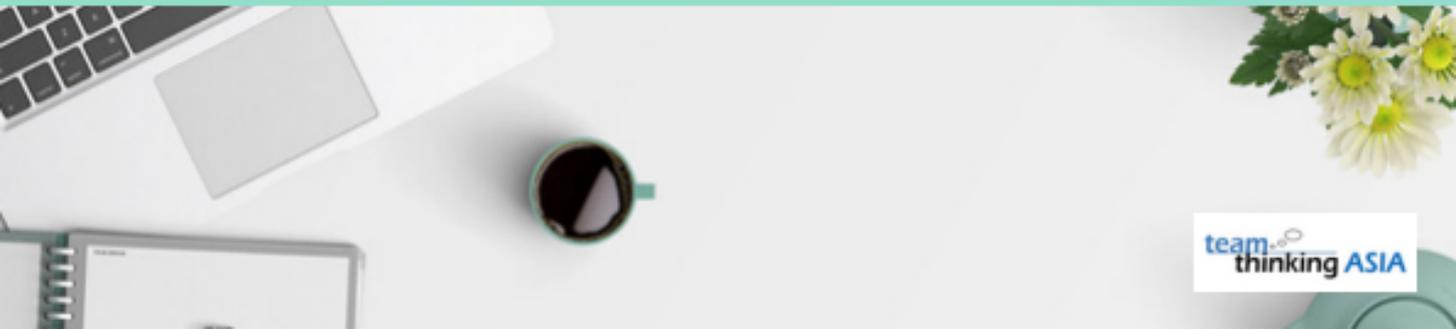
DE-CLUTTER

Tidy home, tidy mind...

I bet you have some organisational things on your to-do list that have been on there for a while. Maybe going through clothes, sorting out toys to donate or tidying the cupboard, garage, shed or office. You can use this period to get them done.

Getting organised and de-cluttering allows us to exert some control over our lives and that helps us to feel more calm. Plus it'll feel amazing just to have it done. Organise your wardrobes, your kitchen cupboards, your books, your photos, your office files. Whatever needs organising. 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, YouTube or read one of her books.



So, which of the above ideas resonates with you?

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

This current and strange situation will end. We don't know quite when right now, but it will. 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.

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