

Maintain Your Physical and Mental Health during Difficult Times

By Melissa Dallenbach RN

In this unprecedented time of working from and staying home, here are some tips to maintain your physical and mental health:

1. Create routines, both personal and work-related. Wake up and get ready at the same time, as if you are going to work or class. Make time for yourself before jumping into school or work demands, even if it is just a quick cup of coffee, while you plan the day. Even though it is tempting, get out of your pajamas. Showering and getting ready for the day, can help you feel focused and energized.
2. Designate a regular, quiet workspace and keep it organized. Keep regular working hours if you are able to, set a time for when you work. Keeping family time separated from work as much as possible, can decrease stress, and create balance. When you can, put limits on demands from family and even pets. Create lists of what you plan to get done, highlight the top three, if you complete your priority tasks, you'll have a sense of accomplishment. Delete distracting social media apps, stay away from personal/social calls, emails, until work is completed. Even setting a timer to promote periods of focus can help.
3. Take smart, mindful breaks. Re-energize by going for a walk or run outside or do a home workout video. Disconnect from electronics when you need a mental break. Taking a virtual lunch with a friend or co-worker can help you feel like you are still connected to others.
4. Stay active; it's easy to neglect exercise. Scheduling regular exercise time into your day can help. Be aware that taking a break and getting exercise can help you stay focused and energized, and promotes productivity. Being sedentary for long periods is not healthy. Sedentary people are at increased risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and high blood

pressure. Besides scheduling regular exercise, taking quick breaks every hour to do something that takes only a few minutes, like walking up and down a flight of stairs, can make a big difference in how many steps you get in for the day.

5. Meal planning and prepping can save time and help you stay within a budget. Working fewer hours or being unemployed can be stressful. Planning meals, ahead, can help stretch your food budget. Explore creative ways to use left overs, try new, healthy recipes. Embrace new ways of thinking. A filling family meal does not always need to include meat; mixing vegetarian meals into your plan can make an economical difference, and be healthy, too. Examples of filling, vegetarian meals: beans and rice, and lentil soup. Explore options.
6. Keep hopeful, hard times like pandemics, eventually end. Focus on looking forward to brighter times. Stay connected to family and friends that are experiencing the same things you are. Ask for help, if you need it. Your county's Human Services and Public Health Departments have a wealth of community resources. Be open to new experiences. If you find yourself unemployed, trying a new job if an opportunity arises, can increase your sense of hope and well-being. You never know where a new path could take you.