

# RUTGERS HEALTH

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## 10+1 TIPS FOR THRIVING DURING SHELTER IN HOME

Over the next few weeks, many of us may be required to spend more time at home than we typically would. There are many things we can do to manage our mental health, just as we do our spiritual and our physical health. When we organize and create a plan, we are better prepared for the unknown.

Cabin Fever is a thing! In the past, we may have often under-estimated the value, the benefit, the sense of wellness that we derive from going to the supermarket, to run other errands, or to go to Church, to work, to meet up with friends or family, or to interact with lots of people. Even if we never talk with another person during our day, we connect when we can see other people, when we watch them, have thoughts about them, and in other ways interact. When we see things that make us frown, make us smile, make us feel, make us avoid feeling we are connecting on some level. We are social beings, and as a result, we need to connect with others. If we are asked to spend more time indoors, introverts might have a slightly easier time than extroverts initially. However, we all will get through this period with a plan and some preparation.

1. **Organize your days.** Create a schedule so your days are organized.
2. **Stick to a schedule.** Each morning, plan to get out of bed as you normally would, and shower or change, as though you were going to work. (In other words, continue with your morning routines as though you were going to work. If you have devotions, have your devotions, if you shower, breakfast, workout, or other activities, do them.)
3. **Limit your work to normal work hours.**
  1. If you are now working from home, plan to be at work (your computer) approx. 15 minutes before so that you are ready for work.
  2. Do not allow work to consume your whole day when you are at home.
  3. Do get up from your computer every hour, move for about 5 minutes, then return to work. It is unhealthy to sit for very long periods.
  4. Remember to break for lunch.
  5. When your workday is done, shut your computer down. If you work past your workday, that should be the exception, not the norm. Balance is key when we are sheltering in home.
4. **Go outside daily for at least 15-30 minutes.** Feel the sun, or the rain, breathe in fresh air, and if possible, feel the ground (earth) beneath your feet. These are essential. If you can be in your backyard, be there. If you have a front porch, go there. Go outside.

5. **Schedule time for physical workout.** The body is made to move. Many gyms are providing video links so we may exercise at home. There are YouTube videos that provide high quality exercises for free. With or without equipment: E.g., Planet Fitness has a daily, live 20 minute workout on its Facebook page; and Team Body Project ([www.teambodyproject.com](http://www.teambodyproject.com)) provides workout for all levels and ages. If you do not have access to the Internet, or are not ready for exercising with your computer, put on music and walk around the room, jog in place, dance or any movement that increases your cardio activity. I have a moniker, “**Movement is medicine**”. Try to get a minimum of 30 minutes of movement each day.
6. **Schedule time to connect.** If you live with anyone, schedule at least one activity each day to do something with your family in the home. You may eat a meal, play a game, or exercise with the others in your home. Be creative. Whether or not there is someone in the home, check in on a friend, family member, next door or far away.
7. **Schedule time for spiritual workout.** For some, that includes praying, reading Scripture, being still while listening. (Many people practice stillness e.g., mindfulness as a way of improving their mental health.) Stillness is vital.
8. **Build mastery in something.** Keep your mind active and renewed by learning something - every day. This includes practicing a skill or an art that you want to get better at doing. You may cook a new recipe, practice or pick up a hobby, read a book, take an online class (Institutions like MIT, Harvard, and Coursera, offer free online classes), or learn a language (there are free apps e.g., Duo Lingo). We should always be learning.
9. **Manage your health.** If you notice an increase in anxiety or depression, talk with a professional. Insurance companies are allowing tele-health (via video or phone) across the board, for providing mental health care. If you do not have insurance, each county has access to mental health care. Find a professional. Ask for help. Accept the help.
10. **Practice gratitude.** Look for something, even one thing for which you can give thanks.

**Plus 1:** Filter your source of news. Consider getting updates from the CDC and/or your state’s department of health. Limit the frequency of news, especially if you notice they are increasing anxiety. During this time, do not rely on social media.

Finally, you probably do not need to hoard food or medicine, since hoarding is a subtle way to communicate to our brains that we need to be anxious. Rather, let us consider this an opportunity to reset our priorities and the way we do things.