

Staying mentally healthy during social distancing, quarantine and exit restrictions due to Covid-19

A short programme of behavioural therapeutic interventions for self-application

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In the current situation, with the all-dominant corona virus, it is easy to understand why our mental state may suffer. Our social contact and daily structure have changed dramatically, and existential fears or fears of falling ill may develop. We all have to adjust to new circumstances almost daily, which demands a lot from the psyche. With psychotherapy, we can look at our thoughts, feelings, behaviour and body.

Make a note of any changes you have noticed in yourself in these 4 areas.

Exercise 1. thoughts emotions behaviour body

psychological effects due to the coronavirus situation



The thoughts and feelings described above are quite normal and reasonable for the current situation. However, we need to consider their duration and intensity.

2. Conditional model of mental consequences

A vicious circle can develop because all factors are interdependent – see cycle below. This can lead to an increase in depression, anxiety and other mental illnesses. If you have ever received psychiatric therapy or psychotherapy before, it is possible the symptoms may now worsen. You may have already noticed that much of what was suggested in therapy is no longer possible as we are confronted with restrictions that make our hobbies and social contact more difficult.

psychological effects due to the coronavirus situation



You can use this as a workbook to take a closer look at your daily mental state. In doing so, you can actively help maintain your mental health or prevent any worsening of symptoms. You can choose to read sections that seem relevant to you or work through the booklet from start to finish. You will find both information and exercises in this booklet. We recommend that you print out the booklet so that you can write in it.

Summary of tips to use:

- 1. Create a daily routine Plan activities and create structure in your day.
- 2. Use your energy to carry out positive activities.
- 3. Stay in social contact have a conversation with someone at least once a day, even if it is only for a short time.
- 4. Move around exercise for at least 30 minutes a day.
- 5. Allow yourself to have "bad" feelings too.
- 6. Try to think positive thoughts at the end of each day.
- 7. Create time for yourself especially when you live with someone.

Perhaps you already know exactly where your difficulties lie in your current everyday life, or perhaps you simply feel uncomfortable but do not know why. Please fill out the questionnaire below to find out which topics of this workbook might be most relevant for you.

Behaviour - Questionnaire

Please fill out the following short questionnaire to identify the areas of most difficulty. If your score is higher than 3, go to the displayed page to find exercises and materials for the topics you are interested in

				1 = no 2= ratl 3= tru 4= ratl 5= per	her no e parti her tru	ot true ly
Question	1	2	3	4	5	Page
I find it hard to get out of bed.	1	2	3	4	5	7
I don't know how to spend my days.	1	2	3	4	5	8 - 11
I'm bored and I don't know what to do	1	2	3	4	5	12 - 13
I have too little physical activity and feel restless	1	2	3	4	5	14 - 15

4.1.1 Get out of bed



- Many people struggle to get out of bed without the pressure of deadlines.
- Get up at the same time regularly.
- Even on weekends!
- This is how you can prevent problems with sleep, as sleep benefits from routine. If you don't have any external appointments, you can sleep a little longer than usual but regularity is important.



- Before you get up, already think about what will be good today.
- Get dressed don't stay in your pyjamas!
- Enjoy breakfast: Take your time if you have it. Have breakfast like you would at the weekend. Think about what you would like to have for breakfast and arrange it nicely (e.g., with fresh orange juice, fresh croissants, etc.)
- Plan when you will do sport immediately after getting up.
- Schedule a phone call straight after breakfast.
- Go for a walk right after breakfast.
- Arrange online sport with friends.



Choose a new idea like the tips listed above for each day and carry it out. Observe what helps you to get out of bed easier. Write down your experiences in the chart below. Make whatever helps a ritual.

Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

4.1.2 Daily structure¹



- Daily structure is important for mental health and is an integral part of most people's lives. The current restrictions can lead to a loss of daily structure: through home office, closure of businesses, shorter working hours, closure of day-care centres, loss of work or voluntary work.
- Your aim should be to bring structure to your day. On the following pages you will find suggestions and exercises for building structure into your day.



Work and external activities create a daily structure, as deadlines are set from outside. Usually you already know in the morning or the day before what the day will look like. We can make use of this. Take a look at the sample schedule below.

Example: plan for a day

07:00 - 08.00	getting up br	reakfast
08:00 - 09:00	30 Min. Yoga	reading the paper
09:00 - 10:00	washing clothes	s and folding
11:00 - 12:00	mail/bills	
12:00 - 13:00	preparing lunch	I
13:00 - 14:00	eat lunch	
14:00 - 15:00	take a walk	
15:00 - 16:00	clean the living	room
16:00 - 17:00	care for plants	
17:00 - 18.00	make a call	
18:00 - 19:00	prepare dinner	
19:00 - 20:00	eat dinner	
20:00 - 21.00	watch a movie c	or TV
21:00 - 22:00		
22:00 - 23:00	relaxation exerc	cise and go to bed

Plan a day at home, include <u>all kinds</u> of activities. Be sure to alternate between strenuous (orange) and relaxing (green) activities. Use the empty template below for this. You can use the building blocks of activity suggestions found after the template. Cut them out and stick them in the appropriate places. You can also add your own ideas.

Daily planning

07:00 - 08.00	
08:00 - 09:00	
09:00 - 10:00	
11:00 - 12:00	
12:00 - 13:00	
13:00 - 14:00	
14:00 - 15:00	
15:00 - 16:00	
16:00 - 17:00	
17:00 - 18.00	
18:00 - 19:00	
19:00 - 20:00	
20:00 - 21.00	
21:00 – 22:00	
22:00 - 23:00	

Daily planning activity suggestions

Obligations

Cook a meal

Do the laundry

Clean the windows

Tidy up

Cleaning

Mail/Invoices/paperwork

Grocery shopping

Make the bed

Tidy the cellar

Sort out the wardrobe

File a tax return

Prepare presentation

Positive

Television

Relaxation exercises

Telephone/skyping

Care for your body

Eat

Go for a walk

Sport

Online shopping

Gardening

Read

Study another language

Baking



Plan a whole week at home, with <u>all kinds</u> of activities. Be sure to alternate between strenuous (orange) and relaxing (green) activities. Use the empty template below for this. You can use the above building blocks of activity suggestions. Cut them out and stick them in the appropriate places. You can also add your own ideas.

time	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday
07:00 - 08.00					
08:00 - 09:00					
09:00 - 10:00					
11:00 - 12:00					
12:00 - 13:00					
13:00 – 14:00					
14:00 - 15:00					
15:00 - 16:00					
16:00 - 17:00					
17:00 - 18.00					
18:00 – 19:00					
19:00 – 20:00					
20:00 - 21.00					
21:00 - 22:00					
22:00 – 23:00					

4.1.3 Positive activities

-ݣඁ Info

You can't be productive all day long - a demand that many people set themselves in these times. For the sake of our mental state, it is important to do the things that are good for us. When many opportunities outside the home are gone, this can be difficult. The following pages are intended to help you identify positive activities and how to implement them in current everyday life.



Write a list of all the things that are good for you; that make you feel alive; that you enjoy; that give you energy to concentrate; that relax you; that are exciting.

Examples for positive activities

I feel good when I	I feel relaxed when I	I have fun doing
⇒	⇒	⇒
⇒	⇒	⇒
⇒	⇒	⇒
⇒	⇒	⇒
⇒	⇒	⇒
⇒	⇒	⇒
⇒	⇒	⇒
⇒	⇒	⇒
⇒	⇒	⇒



Some things, such as going to the gym, are currently not possible due to the situation. Think about how activities that you usually like to do can be adapted so that you can still do them at home or alone.

adjusting positive activities

Usually I like to do	How can I adjust this acitivity to the current situation?
\Rightarrow	
⇒	⇒
\Rightarrow	⇒

Examples for positive activities

I feel good when I

- ⇒ talk to a friend
- ⇒ take a hot shower
- \Rightarrow eat chocolate
- ⇒ watch a good movie
- \Rightarrow read
- ⇒ snuggle
- ⇒ watch videos on youtube
- ⇒ ride a bike
- ➡ take a walk

- ⇒ take a bath
- ⇒ do a relaxation exercise

I feel relaxed when I ...

- ⇒ am mindful
- \Rightarrow look out the window
- ⇒ write in my journal
- ⇒ put on bodylotion
- \rightleftharpoons listen to good music
- \Rightarrow meditate
- ⇒ do yoga

I have fun ...

- ⇒ riding my bike
- ⇒ exercising until i sweat
- ⇒ sunbathing
- ⇒ having a good conversation
- \Rightarrow watching a funny movie
- \Rightarrow dancing and singing
- \Rightarrow shopping online
- ⇒ having sex

adjusting positive activities

Usually I like to do	How can I adjust this acitivity to the current situation?
⇒ going to a yoga class	find online classes (e.g. on youtube) or find exercises in books and do them at home
⇒ going to the gym	⇒ find workouts online
	try an alternate sport (running, Nordic walking)
⇒ meeting friends	call more or use video services, send e-mails or text messages, write a letter or a postcard, send a package
⇒ travelling	think about where you want to go next, do research about that destination, cook the local cuisine, try learning the language

<u>`</u>

Further info - Search for alternatives

Many cultural institutions currently offer free alternatives on the Internet. For example, the Munich State Opera has created online schedules where concerts or ballet are broadcast live.

Available: https://www.staatsoper.de/stream.html

Online programme of the German Opera in Berlin: <u>https://www.deutscheoperberlin.de/de_DE/corona-aktuelle-hinweise</u>

In this article you will find a collection of offers:

https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/streaming-angebote-opern-und-konzerte-im-netz-ld.1547661

4.1.4 Movement



Regular exercise is good for the mood and should be done regularly even during these times. People who exercise have a lower risk of developing depression. One hour of sport per week is enough and it doesn't have to be competitive sport, light exercise is sufficient!



Plan at least one hour of exercise per week, but if possible 30 minutes of exercise per day. First collect ideas for exercise in the fresh air and at home. Then include them in your weekly and daily schedule. You will find more ideas on the next page.

ideas for physical activity



ideas for physical activity



-ݣ Info

There are "online fitness studios" where you can take part in online exercise courses, either for a fee or free of charge.

This article gives an overview of further offers: <u>https://www.sueddeutsche.de/sport/sport-uebungen-coronavirus-workout-zu-hause-training-1.4852843</u>

On youtube.de you can do many sport courses by entering the search term: "Yoga beginners" for example

Social contact is very important for mental health. We are currently practicing "social distancing" - in other words, we must keep a distance from others. Already after a short time, we notice that this does something to our mood. It is extremely important to maintain social contact but at the same time keep the physical distance. We should rather call it "physical distancing" or "distant socializing". Thanks to technology, like the phone and internet, it is easier to stay in touch. However, be aware that staying at home more can lead to more conflicts in the family, with your partner or children.

4.2.1 How can I stay in touch?



- Try to have social contact every day either by phone, email, mobile, social networking, chatting to neighbours from your balcony or professional networks.
- Make plans for social contact.
- Talk about your loneliness.
- Many psychotherapists offer telephone or video consultation hours.
- Even short contact of a few minutes can provide relief.



Exercise 1.

Make a list of reference people. People you can contact: Family members (even distant ones), friends, acquaintances, colleagues, neighbours, professional help. Realizing who is in your social network can already reduce the feeling of loneliness.

Who?

How?



Think about each person you listed above. How and how often can you keep in contact with them. This time of social distancing can be a good excuse to get in touch with old contacts or build friendships.



Look for ways to stay in touch with others and try different things. Take the initiative, even if you are normally a reserved person. In the current situation everyone needs support.

- ⇒ Phone
- ⇒ Video call with individuals (Skype, FaceTime, WhatsApp)
- ⇒ Video call in a group (Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom, HouseParty)
- ➡ Make appointments online for social occasions: doing sport, eating together, having a drink, or a coffee or teabreak)
- ⇒ Talk to neighbours from the window or balcony
- ⇒ Write a letter or a postcard
- ⇒ Record and send voice messages
- ⇒ Exchange information online in chats or forums



Remember back to beautiful social occasions. Try to put yourself in that situation again. Use photos, videos, diary entries to refresh your memory of the event. Take your time for this. Write down an experience here:





For more suggestions on social remembrance, answer the following questions:

⇒ Which person has positively surprised you lately?

 \Rightarrow When you take care of a loved one - what does it look like?

⇒ What do you particularly like about your friend?

⇒ Who makes you feel safe?

⇒ Who can you really laugh with?

⇒ What funny incident with a friend or acquaintance comes to mind?

⇒ What would you rather do together with others than alone?

⇒ If you could give an award to someone, who would it be and why?

 \Rightarrow With whom can you relax best?

⇒ Who has helped you through difficult times before?

4.2.2 Solving social difficulties at home

Spending a lot of time together at home can lead to difficulties. Especially when life is normally structured by work, sport and social contact; some people experience the many hours spent at home together as stressful.



- Look for feelings that may indicate that you need some time alone: Irritability, inner restlessness, getting annoyed by little things these can be indications that things are currently "too much" and that you need to retreat.
- Communicate to your partner/roommate the need to be alone Say it!
 - Find solutions together. This also works in cramped living conditions:
 - Go for a walk alone.
 - Watch a movie by yourself.
 - Divide household tasks so that you can do them separately.
 - Define clear times when you separate work, sport and private life.
 - Divide the rooms for certain periods of time.
 - "Date" at times when you do something together, e.g., play games, cook and eat together, watch TV together, go for a walk.
 - Also split up the care of the children. If only one of you is at home, ask your partner to look after the children in the evening so that you can have some time for yourself.
- Communicate with your partner/roommate even if you do not want to talk.
- Be understanding if your partner also needs time for him/herself.
- Often a few minutes to an hour are enough to clear your head so take it.

It's normal to be annoyed by the people you love too. Seldom have you spent so much time together without outside activities. Allow yourself these feelings and needs.

In this new situation, many thoughts about the virus itself and its social and economic consequences come to mind. The confrontation with constantly new information and statistics, can lead to circles of repeating thoughts.

4.3.1 I can't switch off

With the daily news reports about Covid-19 and its consequences, it can be difficult to mentally switch off. Often, we read mobile phone messages before falling asleep, which can disturb our sleep. There is already the term "infodemy" around, which also means that there are many rumours, false reports and fake news. The following exercises can help you to let go of your thoughts.



Set fixed times when you allow yourself to read or watch the news about Covid-19 - but no more than 2-3 times a day. Each time the thought comes to your mind that you want an update, postpone it to your next set time.



Do not read text messages before falling asleep. Instead, read a book or do relaxation exercises. Even better, try not to look at your smartphone for 1 hour before going to bed.



In conversations, pay attention to how much time the topic "Corona" takes up. You may be more stressed after a conversation that was only about Corona. If this is the case, try to direct the conversation to other topics. However, it may also be that it is good to talk to others about your own Corona-related fears, in which case you do not need to change anything. Observe what does you good!



Brooding place: This technique is often practiced in psychotherapy. Find a place to brood in your home. This should not be the sofa or the bed – but rather an uncomfortable place. Go to this place whenever you wish to think about Corona in a stressful way. Only brood over Corona in that brooding place.



Stop brooding: Observe your thoughts - do you brood/ruminate over the same worries or do you solve a concrete problem? Thinking in circles can be very stressful and have a very negative effect on your mood and drive. Recognize thought circles and interrupt them by saying "STOP!" out loud. Clap your hands or thighs - change your posture.



Use this list to see whether you are ruminating or constructively solving a problem.

rumination

- thoughts like "When will this be over?", "What will happen in the future?", "Should we have been better prepared?"
- mostly about the future or the past, things you cannot change
- ⇒ circulating, you reach no solution
- ⇒ your mood deteriorates
- ⇒ through these thought processes you feel exhausted and depressed or anxious

problem solving

- precise problems "Which groceries do I need to buy today?, "How can I structure my day?"
- ⇒ mostly topics in the present that you have influence on
- ⇒ you mood stays neutral or improves as you solve a problem
- ⇒ you have enough energy to deal with the problem

If you notice that you are ruminating, try to interrupt it quickly and redirect your thoughts.

4.3.2 Putting pressure on yourself

Observe yourself: Are you perhaps under pressure to use your time particularly efficiently or sensibly now? Are you often dissatisfied with those similar days when you can't do much and can't pursue your hobbies and can't see friends?



Exercise 1.

Tell yourself at least 3 times a day that everything you are feeling at the moment is fine and that you are not able to do much right now. Give yourself permission to rest. To remind yourself you can hang/stick notes up with encouraging sentences around your apartment.

For example, "I can't do much right now and it's okay if I only do a little", "I don't have to do anything right now".

During the initial restrictions, many facilities where we do something for our physical health and fitness have had to close. Gyms, yoga studios, sports clubs, dance studios and exercise trails are all closed. Nevertheless, the body needs exercise. Try to incorporate exercise into each day (see page 14). At the same time, mental tension can also result in physical tension - the consequences of this: tension, pain and sleep disorders. Make sure you get enough exercise, relaxation and sleep.

4.4.1 Relaxation



Everyone understands relaxation differently, for some it means being active with sport; for others it means sitting in front of the television. However, psychotherapeutically, we often mean relaxation techniques, such as:

- ⇒ Progressive muscle relaxation according to Jacobson
- ⇒ Autogenic training
- ➡ Mindfulness
- ➡ Breathing exercises
- ➡ Hypnosis

Perhaps you have already tried some of these, if not, why not take the opportunity now!

Exercise 1.

Observe your body and whether you feel tense. Record any signs of tension here:

⇒

- ⇒
- ⊑>
- ⇒

⇒

- ⇒
- ⇒



Try one relaxation exercise per day. It helps to practice not only when you are very tense, but before that happens. Instructions for relaxation exercises can be found on many health insurance companies' websites. We have compiled some of them for you below. You can also find many other instructions and videos on the Internet, find something that you like and that suits you.

<u>Progressive muscle relaxation according to Jacobson</u> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8NdFOXBgxE - from the AOK

https://www.tk.de/techniker/magazin/life-balance/aktiv-entspannen/progressivemuskelentspannung-zum-download-2021142 - from the TK for download

Autogenic training

https://www.vigo.de/rubriken/koerper-und-seele/entspannung-undachtsamkeit/lesen/autogenes-training-cd-bestellen.html - CD order option for AOK insured persons

Breathing exercises

https://www.tk.de/techniker/magazin/life-balance/aktiv-entspannen/atementspannung-zumdownload-2007126 - from the TK for download

Mindfulness exercises

https://www.tk.de/techniker/magazin/life-balance/aktiv-entspannen/body-scan-download-2007110 - Bodyscan from the TK for download

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLCg4mkhlAg - Bodyscan from the AOK

4.4.2 Sleep hygiene ³

Sleep and the quality of sleep can suffer under these changed conditions. Perhaps you suffer from not being able to sleep through the night without waking or have difficulty falling asleep. These are understandable reactions to when you are generally tense. Try to follow the rules of good **sleep hygiene.** It is important you stick to these rules if you are having trouble sleeping. Observe whether it has a positive effect on your sleep.

Info - sleep hygiene rules

- 1. Sleep in a darkened, quiet room in a cool environment.
- 2. Do not eat just before bedtime.
- 3. Alcohol, nicotine and caffeine can disturb sleep leave them out before going to sleep.
- 4. Make sure you get enough exercise during the day and keep yourself busy but be careful not to overdo it. Overstraining also leads to poorer sleep.
- 5. Find a sleeping ritual and practice it regularly.
- 6. Do not look at your mobile phone just before going to sleep.



Think of a sleep ritual. The body and sleep react positively to regularity and routine. You can prepare the body for the coming sleep before going to bed. Consciously drink a cup of herbal tea, review the day, think about what was "good" today, do a relaxation exercise, read a few pages in a book ... whatever best suits you. The ritual should make a clear distinction between day and night.

In the current situation, you are probably confronted with different feelings.



Please write down here the feelings you are now confronted with. Also think about what triggers these feelings in you.

Examples of possible feelings:

Emotions during coronavirus

⇒ anxiety

- ⇒ anxious about the financial situation
- ⇒ anxious about the disease
- ⇒ anxious for family members
- ⇒ anxiety about the future

⇒ sadness

- ⇒ being sad about the thing we cannot do at the moment (see friends, go to work, etc.)
- ⇒ helplessness
- ⇒anger
 - ⇒ angry at people who are not compliant with restrictions and risk others
 - ⇒ angry at politicians
 - ⇒ angry at members of the household that you have to spend a lot of time with



Give yourself permission for these feelings. We are in an exceptional situation that we have never experienced before and whose developments we cannot influence. It is okay to be afraid and feel helpless. Boredom and sadness are also perfectly fine. Tell yourself this regularly. If you have difficulties with this, you can hang up one of these notes.

It's a difficult time and everything I feel right now is When I'm worried, I take good care of myself and let Vou. Positive thinking is good, but I don't have to succeed. I am allowed to share my thoughts and feelings with others, even if they are not positive or encouraging. © Marie Bartholomäus & Prof. Dr. Leonhard Schilbach 27



The acceptance of your feelings is very important! However, it is possible that these feelings become day-determining and you may be unable to act. If you notice that you are permanently burdened by these feelings and that this also affects your energy level, mood or relationships, try to influence your feelings through activities, sport, conversations or by focusing on positive things.



On the next page, fill out the boxes with some options of how you can influence your feelings.







Keep a positive diary. Focus your thoughts on the good things that are happening. You can do this, for example, at the end of the day just before you go to bed. The following questions can help orientate you. You can write your thoughts down or just think about each question.

- 1. What did I do well today?
- 2. Which moment was beautiful today?
- 3. When did I feel good today?
- 4. What did I enjoy today?
- 5. What am I looking forward to tomorrow?

You can print, cut and staple the next page as a template for a positive diary.

What did I do well today?

Which moment was beautiful today?

When did I feel good today?

What did I enjoy today?

What am I looking forward to tomorrow?

What did I do well today?

Which moment was beautiful today?

When did I feel good today?

What did I enjoy today?

What am I looking forward to tomorrow?

What did I do well today?

Which moment was beautiful today?

When did I feel good today?

What did I enjoy today?

What am I looking forward to tomorrow?

What did I do well today?

Which moment was beautiful today?

When did I feel good today?

What did I enjoy today?

What am I looking forward to tomorrow?

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In a mental emergency, various points of contact are available to you. Make use of them!

Psychotherapy practices are currently allowed to offer consultation hours (including initial contacts) via video consultation and are usually open.

Mental crises

Nationwide

Pastoral advice service Phone: 0800/111 0 111 or 0800/111 0 222 https://www.telefonseelsorge.de

German Depression Relief

Helpline: 0800 / 33 44 533 https://www.deutsche-depressionshilfe.de

Upper Bavaria Crisis Service Psychiatry Upper Bavaria Phone: 0180 - 655 3000 https://www.krisendienst-psychiatrie.de

Loneliness in old age

Silver net - for people over 60 who feel lonely Phone: 0800 - 4 70 80 90 https://www.silbernetz.org

Domestic violence

Helpline: 08000 116 016, available around the clock https://www.hilfetelefon.de/gewalt-gegen-frauen/haeusliche-gewalt.html All content was created independently, but based on the following sources:

¹Hautzinger, M. (2013). Cognitive behavioral therapy for depression. Weinheim: Beltz.

² Teismann, T., Hanning, S., von Brachel, R., & Willutzki, U. (2012). Cognitive behavioral therapy of depressive brooding. Springer-Verlag.

³ German Society for Sleep Medicine (2019). Sleep Hygiene - Patient Guide of the German Society for Sleep Research and Sleep Medicine (DGSM).

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