



Ascension

Ascension WI EAP

Keep a Positive Outlook During Trying Times

Donna Schmitz, MA, NCC, LPC

Recently, most Americans' lifestyles have changed dramatically. Individuals from every economic, social and age group are having to make significant adjustments to the way they live, including temporary lay offs or working from home. All of this means that there will be social isolation, at least to some extent. The following tips will give you ideas to make this time of quarantine and social distancing a little easier.

1. Now is the time to brush up on technology.

Learn how to use video calls so that you can schedule coffee dates with your friends. It will be a little awkward at first but face-to-face interaction can have wonderful effects on your mood.

2. Start a journal or facebook blog about some special interest you have.

Spring is coming! Do you go crazy over the birds coming back from migration? Do you love to take walks around your yard to see what new plant life is popping up after the long winter? What about comedy? Do you have a special way of turning this current crisis we are facing into a lighthearted joke that will bring a smile to someone's face? Whatever it is that gets you excited, take pictures and write about it!

3. Get organized! Focus on one space at a time. Completely remove everything from that space, then reinvent it. Surf the net for creative ways to organize and declutter. Chances are you can redecorate each space of your house without ever

purchasing a new item! The effects on your mental health? Well, I will let you figure that one out on your own. If you need a book to get you started, this is my personal favorite: ***Beautifully Organized: A Guide to Function and Style in Your Home*** by Nikki Boyd.

4. Speaking of organizing, why not venture into your closet and try on every piece of clothing you have? Try to create new outfit combinations. But if you do not absolutely love it, list it or donate it to your local charity. You can also list items on an online consignment shop such as Poshmark or Mercari. Not only will you have a nicely organized closet but you could actually make yourself some extra cash. Who can't use extra cash these days?

5. Treat yourself to a home spa day. Winter tends to dry out our skin; a home spa treatment can re-hydrate your skin. Get out all those facial and body products that you have in your linen cabinet but never have time to use. When was the last time

you had time to soak in a bubble bath and pamper your skin from head to toe, or take the time to learn how to style or braid your hair differently? Now is that time!

6. Write letters, thank you notes or poetry! Get the whole family involved. Kids can practice their writing skills and so can you. Write to your mom, grandparents, grandchildren or friends. Everyone likes an old-fashioned letter, a poem or a thank you note of appreciation. NOTE: If you have a shut-in parent or grandparent, start a notebook and take turns writing back and forth to each other.

7. Paint kindness rocks! Paint rocks with uplifting messages on them and hide them in your friends' and neighbors' yards. Maybe you can't hang out with them but being close to them will help you both!

8. Try mindful meditations. Lie down and close your eyes. Focus on a positive thought while taking slow breaths in, holding, and releasing. Repeat this several times and feel the positive effects in your mind and body as you relax.

9. Read all the books you've purchased but have not read. Reading is such a great way to have a change of scenery, especially, if your vacation plans have been cancelled or postponed. Reading is a way to travel to fun destinations and learn new things.

10. Fix things. Throughout the year things tend to break or need maintenance but we don't always have the time to fix them. Make a list of things that need attention and begin tackling these projects. The sense of accomplishment you get will boost your mood and make you forget about time!

11. Cook and bake. Even if you don't like cooking, it can be fun if you do it with your family. To try a new recipe simply go online and search Youtube (or ask Alexa) to pull up a recipe and follow along!

12. Plan a garden. Gardening can be a fun way to challenge yourself and stay occupied. First decide how much space you have to use for a garden—it doesn't take much. If you don't have a yard, no worries! You can do container gardening and grow vegetables on your patio. After determining how much space you have, make a list of all of the fruits and vegetables you love. You also need to decide if you are going to start your garden with seeds or plants. If you start with seeds, you will want to begin them indoors anytime now.

13. Give a hug, take a hug. Chances are you're shut in with your partner and children. Hugs increase oxytocin in your brain which has a positive effect on your mood and mental health. If you live alone, give yourself a hug!!

14. Get into a normal and regular exercise routine. Most gyms are closed but you can do a lot at home with no equipment at all. Go online for free videos to download.

15. Get outdoors as much as you can! Studies show that nature has a positive effect on mental health as does the sunshine vitamin (D).

16. Take your favorite photos and upload to an electronic photo album.

17. Pretend you are dining out. Make appetizers, a charcuterie board, a nice salad and main entree' to serve to your family by candlelite. Surprise them with their favorite dessert.

- 18. Designate a family pizza/popcorn and movie/board game night.** Have prizes for the winners.
- 19. Watch a marathon of your favorite TV series.**
- 20. Learn how to dance from your living room with an online class.**
- 21. Go on a virtual museum tour.**
- 22. Deliberately focus on everything you have!**
With so much focus on things we can't do and don't have, it's easy to let despair take hold. Instead, make a list of things for which you are thankful.
- 23. Complete a new financial forecast based on the current trends.** Try to come up with creative ways to cut cost in your monthly budget and allocate more funds to your emergency fund.
- 24. Make short and long term goals so that you have things to look forward to.**
- 25. Finally, don't let the current crisis consume you.** Don't watch the news. Do not follow the news threads and constant updates on the coronavirus. Allow yourself one 10 minute update a day.

These are all ways to help you keep a positive outlook during these trying times. Hopefully, this list provided a tip or two you can begin to implement immediately to help you from feeling isolated and stir crazy. Remember also that your EAP is here to help. Please reach out if you begin to feel overwhelmed by your current situation.

Final thoughts

Live the life you've always dreamed of. Be fearless in the face of adversity. Never stop learning. Use your imagination whenever possible. Recognize the beauty that surrounds you. Remember where you came from but never lose sight of where you are going.

-Author unknown.

Ascension WI EAP
800-540-3758
eap@ascension.org
AscensionWIEAP.org
