

## Suggestions for managing additional time spent in the home

### Draw up a family agreement

Try and prevent issues from arising by having a family meeting to:

- Discuss concerns about quarantine/ isolation
- Discuss what will be the biggest challenges for each family member
- Talk about each other's strengths and how they can be used to help each other out
- Discuss expectations of each other
- Plan how best to make the most of the positives and minimize the impact of the negatives

### Set up a structure for the day

- Having a routine is helpful for maintaining well-being, it need not be overly strict. It might be helpful to:
  - Agree expectations for being up, dressed and having eaten breakfast
  - Develop a schedule to ensure a good balance of activities are achieved each day
  - Agree a bedtime – this will be supported by setting and sticking to a fixed waking time

### Set and achieve daily goals

Everyone in the family will benefit from feeling as though something has been accomplished each day. This can include working from home/ home learning or completing long-avoided chores, repairs or tasks. Don't forget to include goals like watching a movie or playing games together.

## Give each other space

It can be challenging for families who are used to going off to do their own activities to be forced together for an extended period of time:

Try and create zones or spaces in your home for each family member to retreat to, undisturbed

While time alone is important, so is positive time together. Seek to create times each day to come together (e.g meal times). This can be built into the day's schedule

## Exercise

- Being active helps to boost mood. Family members are likely to feel frustrated and bored if they are inactive:

Current advice is that people can go outside for fresh air and exercise, keeping a distance of 6 feet (the distance of a tall person) between people. Scheduling an hour's walk each day is recommended.

If advice changes and we are asked to remain inside, there are lots of YouTube videos to guide you through home exercise and physical activities.

## Keep in touch with others

A critical component of well being is feeling connected to others:

Connecting with friends and family will be critical for all members of the family. Phone calls and social media can enable us to do this remotely. If you have family members who are not skilled/able to do this independently, make sure you facilitate contact for them.

A sense of well being is also achieved from helping and supporting others. Reaching out to others to make sure they are OK and to offer support will support both parties.

## Managing anxiety

It is natural and normal to experience anxiety in response to Covid 19. A certain level of anxiety is useful and helps us remember to take additional care, but it is important to try and prevent feelings of anxiety from becoming overwhelming. Here are some suggestions for supporting yourself and others with keeping anxiety at a healthy level.

### *Model calmness*

The most important and impactful form of support for those that are anxious is your own behavior. If you are acting and behaving calmly and rationally, you send a clear message that there is no need to panic. To do this, you need to monitor your own feelings and reactions.

### *Share balanced information*

The nature of the information being reported can make it difficult to keep sight of the fact that family members and loved ones are likely to remain safe even if they contract the virus. It is important that you separate what is fact-based (from a reliable source) and what is feelings-based so you don't present your fears as facts.

### *Listen actively* <sup>[1]</sup> <sub>[SEP]</sub>

Listen to family member's feelings, worries and fears; many people are worrying that the worst may happen to them and/or their friends and loved ones. Ask questions in a non-judgmental and understanding manner, letting them know that you are available and interested in hearing their thoughts and feelings. This will make it easier for them to approach you when they are struggling.

### *Validate feelings*

Be careful not to dismiss, invalidate, or reject feelings, this is easily done when wanting to help (e.g. "don't be silly, you're not going to die"). Instead, let others know that it is understandable to feel anxious or angry. Validating feelings can be very powerful in helping people feel understood and calmer, enabling them to process their thoughts and feelings in a

healthy way.

### *Avoid seeking to bury or ignore anxiety*

Encourage family members to practice tolerating and working through feelings of anxiety rather than continually doing something to relieve it or distract from it. 'Sitting with' anxiety may be challenging but it is doable and allows feelings to pass and no longer overwhelm. If anxiety comes over in waves, scheduled 'worry sessions' whereby time is set aside to address anxieties can help family members balance the need to achieve goals and engage in productive tasks with dealing with emotions so they do not become overly burdened by them.

### *Comment on positives*

There is a lot going on in society that is positive and heartening and it is important to focus on this as much as on the challenges. In addition, family members will still have their skills, strengths and unique character to contribute to family life so make sure these are brought to the attention of everyone and appreciated.

### *Watch closely and monitor*

When it comes to coping, age, developmental level, pre-existing anxiety, history of trauma or serious illness, occurrence of other recent stressors, or major life events (such as parental divorce, death of loved ones, major move, change of school) are likely to influence coping.