Staying active while isolated

There are a number of factors that contribute to our mental health and many of these relate to diet, activity and social interaction. Social distancing and isolation can have a profound impact on these three elements. A simple fact to consider, the average person who was commuting to work has lost between 2,000-4,000 steps per day in activity.

Physical activity contributes to both our physical and mental health. With this short guide we will aim to help you remain active while understanding the limitation of being confined. Now, more than ever it is important to take "active breaks" to move, exercise and focus on our mental health.

The activities here are easy to do in your own home and require very little space or extra equipment. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommend that adults should commit to 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity per week while in isolation. This is for people who are in isolation but are not exhibiting any signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

Some things to remember:

Take short active breaks throughout the day

Short bursts of activity will quickly add up to the recommended activity levels. You don't need to do specific exercises but these may be part of your routine. Playing with your children and even doing domestic chores during the day such as cleaning and gardening are methods of staying active and breaking up your day if you are working or not.

Look online for exercise motivation

There are a large number of online exercise classes that are free and available either in Apps or on YouTube. Be careful not to over exert and seek medical advice if you need to before commencing any vigorous activity. Don't go from nothing to everything and likewise don't stop.

Walk and talk

Walking around the house while on the phone to colleagues, friends and family can be a great way to challenge yourself and remain active. If you do go outside to walk make sure you maintain physical distancing. Walking is the simplest exercise and one of the more beneficial that can easily be forgotten when isolated at home.

Get up!

Reduce your sitting time. Stand up whenever possible and interrupt sitting at least every 20-30 minutes. If you are working try to set up a station where you can move your computer to a height that you can work standing – improvise with filing cabinets, high benches or stacks of books.

Screen time

It is important to stay connected but it is equally important to disconnect. Check your screen time change over the past 4 weeks (there is a setting on most phones). It is likely to have increased which is reasonable. Reduce screen time by reading, doing puzzles, talking with family or doing an exercise routine.

Relax

Try to spend some time being mindful. Close your eyes and take deep breaths or look for one of the many Apps or online meditation or calming programs to relax. Relaxation is still exercise and is as important to support your mental health.

Get outside

While we may be restricted, we can still go for walks while maintaining social distancing requirements or be active in our backyards or balconies. Fresh air and sun are important factors to maintain our health and wellbeing.

If you can follow these simple steps you will help your mental health as well as your physical health.

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