



# Coping Strategies

## Living in Lock-down

Original article [link](#)

It's hard to know how everyone is coping with the current isolation and social distancing requirements in response to COVID-19. It seems the world is suddenly unrecognisable and we are all trying to figure out how to live under these new rules. Having our kids at home 24/7, needing to provide home schooling, plus 3 meals a day, while also working from home and trying to keep a level of order and routine, can feel like a big challenge.

For many of us it is already getting to the point where we are bored and the novelty of being at home all the time has worn off. Like those days after Christmas where all the best Quality Street are gone and no one knows what day it is.

Over the last few weeks I have been responding to posts from family and friends on social media, where they have been expressing their frustrations and concerns about what they should do, what they aren't doing and the challenges they are facing. Being in isolation is difficult on a few levels;



Firstly feeling cut off from the world is scary, doubly scary because C19 is having a big impact across the globe and much of the information out there is contradictory.

Secondly, so much is unknown about this new situation, which is constantly changing, we all have lots of questions and not enough answers. Being unsure makes the isolation feel more intense.

Thirdly, being forced to change our habits and lifestyles is not something most people respond well to. When others make decisions for us it can cause us to react badly, like being forced to give up all sugary food immediately verses choosing to limit your biscuit consumption yourself. These restrictions are essential for everyone's wellbeing but when strict rules are imposed human beings often feel unsettled.

Fourthly (if that's even a word), suddenly we are all responsible for managing our children's learning, our own work schedules and various other duties which we just took for granted previously. We were not prepared, there was no training for this and for this and we didn't even get a rehearsal.

Finally, isolation challenges some fundamental aspects of human behaviour, socialising is key in our development and wellbeing. Human interactions and social living provide us with a huge range of positive responses, physical, emotional and mental. Being away from loved ones, unable to reconnect or care for vulnerable families members adds to the challenge.



Our family have a some experience of having to live in a semi-isolated way. Due to my daughter's health condition we have been stuck indoors for weeks at a time in the past. We had to learn how to be in each other's company all the time, while giving each other space when necessary, how to keep busy and productive to avoid boredom, ways to learn new things though we're stuck at home and improving our communication skills to really be able to express our frustrations without arguing. We are still working on the last one but we have made progress.

In response to the lock-down, I thought I would share some of the things we have learnt and used. Here are a few suggestions from my Cognitive Behaviour Coaching based practice to help you manage during this time and hopefully feel less stressed. The activities below can be easily incorporated into our existing routines and are particularly good for families with children.

**Turning off the TV/news** – My first piece of advice is turn off the news. Avoid having the TV or radio running in the background as the constant relay of statistics, facts and updates is exhausting. If you want to know what's going on, pick a couple of times a day to tune in watch the news then switch it of again and get on with other things.

**Socialising** – There are a lot of apps for our mobile phones which allow us to have group video chats with friends and family who we are currently isolated from. It can be a lot of fun and actually seeing people feels more connected than standard voice calls. My tribe favours House Party but Facebook, Whatsapp and many others have group video call options available.

**Learning a new skill** – There are so many new ways to learn thanks to current technology. Take some time to sign up to a learning platform like Udemy or The Open Universities OpenLearn and have a look at their range of free online courses in a variety of subjects. There are also loads of TED Talks and other free to access learning opportunities, including distance learning courses through your local college.

**Meditation & Breathing Exercises** – there are various options available, Youtube and other streaming services offer a huge variety to cater for most people. Trial a few to find what works for you and your family members.





**Art or Craft Activities** – from colouring-in to painting or salt-dough to clay. Learning a new craft or taking time to be creative can be a great de-stressor. [Pinterest](#) is a great place to look for art and craft ideas. This is also an activity which can be done together and help open communication channels.

**Exercise** – Movement and momentum are positive stress relievers and maintaining physical activity during this time is important. Good for emotional and physical health and well-being. A walk, some stretches or yoga, whatever is enjoyable and effective. There are loads of celebrities doing daily exercise videos or even '[PE Classes](#)'.

**Music and Dancing** – Similarly to exercise, dancing is good physically and emotionally. Incorporate music by listening to 3 favourite positive songs each morning or have a regular family dance party. Music can be a great mood enhancer. You can even play [Just Dance](#) without a console, this has been a favourite in our house.

**Reading** – Take the opportunity to read the books you always wanted to or to explore an area of literature you find intriguing. Books and stories provide safe escapism but can also be used to introduce subjects and embed learning in a fun way. Reading promotes language skills and cognition. There are various places you can find free online books and resources like [Many Books](#) which has a number of literary classics as well as a range of genres.



**Journaling** – This activity is popular with teens but can be effective with younger children or adults who enjoy quiet and creative activities. A journal can be written, drawn or used like a scrapbook to help express and 'off-load' emotional baggage. The internet is full of journaling advice and information, my advice is do whatever you feel works for you.

**Toolbox** – Using an old shoe box, compile a 'wellbeing box' which contains a number of items to cheer up the individual and lift their mood. Decorate the box to make it special. Examples of content; hot chocolate sachets, a small colouring book and pencils, a stress ball, photographs or memories of good times. Open this box to help combat negative emotional cycles and build confidence.

**Future Planning** – Building a customised scrapbook or poster which identifies individual emotional triggers and personal solutions, using text, pictures, drawings or collage. An example would be "When I feel (emotion such as anger) ... I can (action, coping strategy, solution)". This book or poster can then be referred to and used to inform behaviour and emotional management strategies.

**Outdoor Activities and Nature** – Being outdoors and in nature is currently limited but even just being in the garden can improve emotional well-being. Include time in daily routines to enjoy being outside where possible. [The Woodland Trust](#) along with many other nature based charities have information and activities available on their websites.



**Relaxation or Naps** – I am a strong advocate of naps. They can be hard to implement for some people, but developing a quiet relaxation time to help manage our mood or let go of stress situations can be particularly impactful. Using, meditation or breathing exercises or music can also help with this practice.

**Visualisation** – This popular CBC technique works well with metaphors and verbal imagery, such as storytelling. With eyes closed, encourage the individual to imagine themselves somewhere positive, help them fill in as much detail about their positive place as possible. Ask them about the smells, sound etc of that place. This process can be used to help manage stress and anxiety.

**Talking** – The main skill of CBC and emotional intelligence is communication. Building communication skills requires regular open conversations. Being encouraged to express and discuss emotions, experiences and challenges in any way which feels comfortable, will support emotional intelligence and confidence. If you feel you are in a crisis there are various charities like [The Samaritans](#) who you can contact.

I know none of these activities will be new to you and I imagine you are already engaging in a few of the items on the list. I am not suggesting you try to utilise all of the activities every day or that this list will work for everyone. But by incorporating one or two activities in whichever part of your weekly schedule feels most beneficial, you can hopefully reduce your stress and feel better equipped to cope with the challenging situation we are all facing.

I hope this article has been useful. I would be really interested in your feedback; If you tried any of the suggestions? What worked? What didn't work? What other activities you and your family have been getting up to? Please feel free to get in touch.

You may also like to have a look at some of the other articles I've written and shared here on subjects like [self-care](#) and [mental health](#). Find the rest of my articles [here](#).

Take care and be safe.

By Sabrina Aries, Founder of [D'Rose Consultancy and Coaching](#)

