

Here are some more tips and articles to help cope with the ongoing health crisis.

First, remember that interpersonal connection is a deeply-embedded survival strategy for us humans. When disaster strikes, we tend to seek out each other in order to process our thoughts and emotions. It's for this reason the post-9/11 country was much more of the picture of unity. There is nothing quite like the humbling reminder of our vulnerability to bring people to seek the support of others or offer it in kind.

The strategy of self-isolation which is being promoted to combat this virus is therefore unfortunately one that goes against our most basic survival instincts. Social isolation and quarantining have the potential to make us feel more confused and uneasy; as if we've suddenly realized that the ground beneath our feet is not the firm mooring we'd believed it to be. So, amidst all the uncertainty and anxiety that this situation can evoke, we turn first to God as our Rock who will never fail us. From a psychological perspective, here are some practical resources and strategies to help us maintain our peace:

- Avoid the news! Constant exposure to the news is a documented depressant. The precautions that we all know well aren't changing and we can't control that. So, let's control what we can – social distance and sanitizing – and leave the rest to the doctors and God. Let's pray for the sick and dying, but constant reminders of death tolls and infection rates are no recipe for staying mentally healthy.
- Get plenty of exercise and sunlight. Among the many wonderful effects of exercise, perhaps the most relevant in this time is that it can help one simply feel happier and increase the quality of sleep. 20 minutes of sunlight per day is another simple, natural remedy for when you're feeling blue, since it increases the levels of serotonin in the brain. Higher levels of serotonin correlate with better mood and feelings of satisfaction and calmness.
- Keep as much of a routine as possible. Routine helps us conserve mental energy by managing our day for us to some degree, and it can give us something to look forward to each day. Build some good things into your routine and keep at it!
- Recreate intentionally. While there is a place for passive entertainment, try to avoid merely “vegging” in all your moments of free time – mindlessly scrolling

through social media or watching TV programs – no matter how tired you may feel. Grab a book you've been wanting to read, research a hobby or an interest, and keep your brain engaged in your recreation! It can give you something to share with others, too.

- Connect with others. Technology has given us at least a version of real human connection that is better than nothing. Reach out to family and friends. When we experience our vulnerability, we tend to open up more, show more of our true selves, and deepen interpersonal bonds. This is directly correlated with a deep sense of satisfaction and happiness, since God has created us for communion!
- Remember: this too shall pass! When we experience something that doesn't have an expiration date attached to it, we tend to project it ad infinitum, i.e. suffer more. So, strive to stay in the moment and practice gratitude. In every challenge lies an opportunity, like a diamond in the rough – easily passed over because it is uncut and unpolished.
- Acknowledge your emotions, whatever they may be. It would be normal to experience fear, frustration, irritability, loneliness, sadness, grief, and anger during this trying time. It is okay to feel how you feel, even if it is uncomfortable. Take your emotions—including your negative emotions--to the foot of the Cross and give them to Our Lord. He will give you the grace to respond virtuously and to grow in holiness.
- Don't be surprised or discouraged if you are more irritable with people. It is hard to be confined to tight spaces. Minor irritations are to be expected and they provide an opportunity to grow in patience. If your irritations persist, it may be helpful to talk it out with the other person, always in charity.
- Check out the articles below for some more tips and support.
<https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief>
<https://newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/is-worry-about-covid-19-disrupting-your-life/>
<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/how-to-stay-quarantined-stay-married-and-keep-your-friends-21294>
<https://denvercatholic.org/simple-ways-to-deal-with-coronavirus-covid-19-anxiety/>

We are praying for you and we are here for you.