

“20 Life Skill Tips For 2020”

Addressing **mental health concerns** in this hour of global crisis

Ever since January 2020 when the World Health Organization (WHO) determined the outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease, COVID-19, to be a “public health emergency of international concern”, stress levels everywhere have continued to mount. The mounting of stress levels , anxiety was not only restricted to China , Italy , Spain but also to our own motherland & many other nations across the globe.

Unprecedented measures to slow and interrupt transmission of COVID-19 are buying us time and reducing pressure on our health systems, but at a significant psychological , social and economic cost. Physical distancing and isolation measures, the closure of schools , colleges and workplaces, are particularly challenging us - as they affect what we love to do, where we want to be, and who we want to be with.

It is time to awaken the “ Little Brave Hero ” in our hearts & heal the World by playing our respective roles not only towards the society but also towards understanding our roles and duties towards our own Physiological & most strikingly our Psychological wellbeing.

Each and every one of us is part of a community. It is our human nature to care for one another, as we, in turn, seek the social and emotional support of others. The disruptive effects of COVID-19 provide us all with an opportunity. An opportunity to check on each other, to call and video-chat, to be mindful and sensitive to the unique mental health needs of those we care for. Our anxiety and fears should be acknowledged and not be ignored, but better understood and addressed by individuals, communities, and governments.

It is essential that we address the public mental health challenges over the coming weeks and months in India and beyond:

- I. By distributing timely, understandable and reliable information from the youngest to the older members of our society;
- II. By providing psychological support to front-line workers and bereaved families;
- III. By continuing care and treatment of people with cognitive, mental and psychosocial disabilities; and
- IV. By protecting human rights, especially of those whose rights are often overlooked or violated, including migrants and refugees, prisoners, residents in other closed settings such as mental hospitals or social care institutions, and people with disabilities.

**A Department of Psychology Initiative in Conjunction with the IQAC Team ,
Asutosh College.**

Strategies to maintain & nurture your mental wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic

Here are some ideas that might be helpful. Some might apply to you and some might not – or they may need to be adapted to suit you personally, your personality, where and with whom you live, or your culture. Please be creative and experiment with these ideas and strategies.

1. Accept that some anxiety and fear is normal : COVID-19 is a new virus and we are still learning about it. The uncertainty about the virus and the changes that are unfolding can make most people feel a bit anxious. This is normal, and it actually can help motivate us to take action to protect ourselves and others, and to learn more about the pandemic.

2. Seek credible information : Stay informed by checking information provided by experts and credible sources. A lot of information is disseminated about COVID-19 every day, but not all of it is accurate. The most reliable source being The directives and facts laid down by The WHO & Government census & reports & not something circulated in the social media lacking the credibility of the speaker.

3. Assess your personal risk : It is helpful to get a clear and accurate sense of your personal risk. Taking into considerations certain facts like “Am I doing something which makes me susceptible to get infected?” , “Am I having sensible neighbours who are equally important in preventing the mass outspread of this epidemic?” “Am I following all the guidelines given by my authorities?”

4. Find a balance: Stay tuned in, but know when to take a breather : While staying informed is helpful, too much information may not provide extra benefit. Limit checking sources to once per day or less if you can. This includes reading or listening to news stories about COVID-19. Even though things are shifting rapidly, daily changes are not likely to affect how you should manage your risk.

5. Bring an intentional mindset to unplugging : Set aside some time to unplug from all electronics, including phone, tablets and computers. Disconnect for a while from social media outlets. You may need to schedule this to make sure it happens.

Do something fun and healthy for yourself instead (e.g., read, work, exercise). Do things which you have always wanted to do but never really got time for it . Do it now !

6. Deal with problems in a structured way : All the issues you might need to address during this pandemic situation may feel overwhelming. It can be useful to identify which things are actually problems that need to be solved or addressed, and which are just worries that are not necessarily grounded in reality.

7. Remember that you are resilient and be careful with the "What ifs" : Our stress and anxiety generally cause us to focus on negatives and trigger “What if” questions, such as “How will I cope if I get sick?” or “How will I manage if I have to self-isolate?” They can also drive us to think about worst case scenarios.

In stressful situations, people often overestimate how bad the situation can get, but underestimate how well they will be able to cope. People are resilient and have coping skills they use every day.

- a) Think of difficult or challenging situations you have encountered that you were able to manage. Even if things weren't perfect, what did you do to cope with the situation?
- b) Remind yourself that you can handle stress and that if you feel you need support, you can reach out to family, friends, colleagues or professionals.
- c) Remember our collective resources – from excellent health care and public health response systems to strong and resilient communities. Try to replace catastrophic thoughts with something like, "This is definitely a difficult time, but we will get through it together."
- d) Don't underestimate what you are able to do when faced with challenges.

8. Challenge worries and anxious thoughts : High levels of anxiety and stress are usually fuelled by the way we think. For example, you might be having thoughts such as “I am going to die” or “There is nothing I can do” or “I won't be able to cope.” These thoughts can be so strong that you believe them to be true.

However, not all our thoughts are facts; many are simply beliefs that we hold. Sometimes we have held these beliefs for so long that they feel like facts. How do we know if our thoughts are true or are just beliefs we've grown used to?

9. Decrease other stressors : COVID-19 is probably not the only source of stress in your life right now. Consider addressing other sources of stress to reduce your overall level of anxiety like challenging your thinking, practicing relaxation and meditation or other strategies you may have used in the past that have helped.

10. Practice relaxation and meditation : Relaxation strategies and meditation can help reduce or manage your levels of stress and anxiety. There are many options to consider:

- a) formal meditation practice such as yoga or mindfulness meditation
- b) informal or self-help approaches such as books and online videos
- c) relaxation through any activity that you find enjoyable and relaxing.

Choose an activity that works for you and that you are likely to continue doing. Start slowly and gradually work toward a regular practice.

11. Seek support : Social distancing does not mean you should break off all contact from loved ones. Being alone can lead to spending too much time thinking about the current situation, resulting in increased stress and anxiety. It can be helpful to connect with people who are a positive influence when you are feeling stressed.

- Reach out and get support from these people – either in person or through phone or video calls or text messaging.
- Look for formal support, either online or by phone, that can help you during high-stress times. For example, you may turn to distress lines, online support groups, or resources in your community such as religious institutions.

Try to avoid people who are negative when talking about current affairs or events, or who generally increase your stress and anxiety.

12. Be kind to yourself : The strategies mentioned here can take some time to work. We need to practise them regularly and in different situations. Don't be hard on yourself if you forget to do something or if you are not feeling better right away.

13. Eat healthily : Boost up your Immune System !!!!

Eating healthily can help us feel better. When we are stressed, many people might choose comfort foods that are not actually good for stress and overall health. As much as is possible, choose more fruits and vegetables, and drink lots of water.

14. Avoid substance use – including smoking and vaping, caffeine and alcohol : Some people use substances, including smoking or vaping, to cope with stress, anxiety and depression. This may appear to help reduce stress initially, but in the long run can make things worse. The brain and body develop a tolerance to the numbing effects of these substances, and people have to compensate by using more and more. That leads to additional harms and often delays the recovery from the stress. Moreover, in those at risk, substance use can lead to an addiction or a relapse in those who are in recovery. If you are in recovery and experiencing stress, it is important to reach out for help before a relapse occurs. In general:

- Reduce or stop using any non-prescribed substance if you can do so safely.
- Take prescription medications as prescribed.
- Try to reduce or avoid caffeine and alcohol.

- Seek out professional help if you cannot do it alone.

15. Get proper rest and sleep : Getting enough sleep can both help reduce the amount of stress we experience and prepare us to better manage stress. Here are some quick strategies to help you get a good night's sleep.

- a) Keep a consistent sleep schedule. This going to bed and getting up at the same time each day (including weekends).
- b) Practise relaxation or meditation before bedtime.
- c) Schedule physical activity for earlier in the day.
- d) Practice sleep hygiene: keep your bedroom cool, avoid any light in your room, use your bed for sleep (not reading, watching TV, using your phone, etc.), and get out of bed if you don't fall asleep after half an hour).
- e) Talk to your doctor if these strategies don't work — there may be other issues affecting your sleep.
- f) If you drink caffeine or alcohol, avoid them late in the day.
- g) Avoid naps during the day if these interrupt your sleep at night.

16. Stay active : Physical activity is a great way to reduce stress and anxiety, and improve our mood and overall health. If you are self-isolated, find ways to exercise in your home. For example, use your stairs or follow an exercise video on YouTube.

17. Assess your stress levels : Understanding your stress levels can help you make a plan for how to manage your stress and anxiety. When some people experience too much stress, they may feel a loss of control, excessive worry and other negative emotions. By managing our stress and anxiety, we can maintain positive mental health as the pandemic evolves.

18. Deal with one day at a time : One of the best ways of dealing with stress and anxiety is dealing with one day at a time . This can be accomplished by dividing the entire day of 24 hours in to small units in terms of hours & accordingly set small smart goals () which are extremely realistic in nature rather than thinking “I am to be home in this condition for god knows how many days?”.

19. Have a Gratitude Journal : Have a diary & pen down everything for which you feel blessed . Acknowledge the fact that you are alive and safe at your home. Acknowledge the fact that every authority is trying to make a positive difference to everybody's life . Acknowledge that you are comfortably being able to read this and comprehend because that too is a disability for many. Mark yourself blessed because you are constantly trying to make a difference even while reading this for the last 10 minutes or so.

20. Lastly , Know yourself more & a little more : Never in our life for at least the last two decades or more have we ever witnessed such a catastrophe. By acknowledging the fact that , this pandemic has taken away so much from us , rather so many lives across the globe. So many economies facing a steep downturns , so many wage earners not being able to sleep properly but we also need to acknowledge that we have to learn to see the positive side of everything.

We need to understand that once this is gone , we all shall return to our daily schedules but this time , with much much more workload hence , lets utilize this specific period in knowing ourselves like never before !

Acknowledging our vulnerabilities & weaknesses as never before !

Acknowledging why am I different from others & embracing that , like never before !

Creating a sound , optimistic , altruistic life like never before ! :)

Here's wishing you all a very safe & introspective Quarantine .

Stay Home , Stay Safe .

Warm Regards ,

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