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Managing Your Personal Life During COVID -19 (Blog Post)

Posted on June 30, 2020

Work and personal relationships are essential to your well-being during this pandemic. During a pandemic your relationships may be challenged by not going to the office or having school, camp, vacations, religious ceremonies and celebrations to attend and compounded by spending more time in close quarters with family and roommates. This blog post highlights some strategies to help you maintain various elements of your personal life – from self-care, to effectively communicating with your partner and talking with your children.

Create a Routine

Working from home or losing your job changes your routine. Our brains thrive with a routine – so create a new one and remember this is only temporary. Go to bed and get up at a regular time, schedule meals, work time, family time and time for activities that you enjoy.

Set Limits

Specify how much time you'll spend on technology, consuming news, reviewing social media, etc. If you're now working from home, you may also need to set limits on how much time you spend working.

Be Creative!

Be intentional about spending time being creative. Cooking, drawing, writing, dancing, and listening to music are all creative outlets that provide an opportunity to use the other side of your brain; especially if your job does not require you to be creative.

Maintaining Connections

Be intentional and make time each day to maintain your social connections. This may include the people you live with, family, co-workers, neighbors, or friends. Don't rely solely on social media and text messaging. Pick up the phone or use FaceTime or another video chat platform to enhance the communication and "see" people. It is important to see people's faces and hear their voices.

Focus on the Greater Good

Some of our connections are less familiar but give us a sense of community. You can maintain your community connections by being grateful and staying calm. You can express your gratitude for essential workers, send thank you notes, or make/donate things to those who need food, personal protective equipment (e.g., masks), or other

essential items. Look for ways to show compassion, especially toward people who do not share your political or cultural views.

Managing Relationships at Home

Appreciate that people have different coping strategies. Although “we’re all in this together,” not everyone reacts the same way to the same situation. Validate each other’s feelings and understand there is no right or wrong way to cope with the pandemic, just different ways. It is important to create space from each other in your home, if you can. That may involve creating a schedule to help family members share space. Some tips include:

- Prioritize self-care so that you are able to care for others.
- Be kind and careful in what you say.
- Use a “time out” if you need to take a break from a conversation and agree to come back and discuss it later. Use that time to calm down, take a walk, or clear your head.
- Focus on the things that you appreciate about those with whom you live.
- Don’t avoid or withdrawal from a conflict or topic; instead schedule a time to discuss it in an intentional way.
- Don’t assume the worst in what someone says, thinks, or does; don’t call people names.
- If you’re having a conversation about a difficult topic, don’t bring up all the other things that might have upset you recently. Stay on topic and work through it.
- “Always” and “never” are very rare situations; yet we often use these terms when we complain about someone’s behavior. Stick to the specific situation when discussing a complaint with loved ones.

Using Effective Communication Tools

Effective complaining: state what happened, when it happened, how it made you feel, and what you need. [e.g., [How to Complain without Hurting Your Partner](#)]

Effective listening: listen to understand, not necessarily to agree or resolve the disagreement, take turns being the one who talks and the one who listens (when it is your turn to talk, speak for yourself using “I” statements; when it is your turn to listen, paraphrase what was just said to build understanding); a structured communication technique (e.g., PREP’s [Speaker/Listener technique](#)) will slow down the conversation for difficult topics.

Talking to Children about COVID-19

Initiate conversations about the pandemic with your children. Remind them that we can’t control if people get sick, but we can make healthy choices like wearing a mask,

washing our hands, and eating healthy to boost our immune system. Talk openly with your children about the choices you, as a family, are making and the actions you're taking. It's also important to recognize what you (and your children) are able to do, not just what you're missing. Just like for yourself, establish a routine and remember it's important to play and move and set limits on technology.

Feelings of anger, grief, and anxiety are valid. Although you may want to put a positive spin on the situation, you should acknowledge that they feel upset and understand that asking the same thing over and over again is an anxiety response. You can model self-soothing coping strategies for grief, anxiety or disappointment.

Finally, you will have to help children prepare to reintegrate to a new normal. Talk to them about what to expect—things won't look the same, and that is OK. There will be things we can do and we need to be thankful for those activities; even though there will be things we can't do (like going to large sporting events or festivals) so you'll need to manage expectations.