LawCareers.Net™

written by

Christianah Babajide

Four ways to look after your mental health during lockdown

updated on 21 January 2021

There's no denying the toll a third lockdown may have on your mental health, so the best thing you can be is well-prepared.

With many of our outlets gone due to new government guidelines, be it the cancellation of social groups, book clubs, game nights and pub quizzes, it is normal to be experiencing 'pandemic fatigue'. At the moment, it feels as though there is no clear end in sight, meaning the lockdown is having a significant negative effect on mental health with many of us experiencing stress and anxiety. Therefore, I have compiled a list of four proactive steps you can take to protect your psychological well-being during this difficult time.

1. Retain your autonomy

The pervasive effects of the pandemic and the restrictions imposed can feel like it's designed to cut us off from the things that give our lives meaning and please us. So, my advice to you is to take back the power and capitalise on aspects of your life that you do have control over. For example, you can control how much time you spend watching TV, how tidy you are going to be, and when and what you eat. Avoid the inclination to 'go with the flow'.

Take charge of how you spend your time by getting into a routine and planning your day; you can even make to-do lists, which might make you feel more productive with your time. Some ideas to incorporate into your routine could be what time you will wake up, how you will spend your weekend or even the amount of time you want to exercise for. Don't forget to factor in some time for self-care too. Once you establish and get into a routine, you are already taking back control.

2. Focus on yourself

During lockdown, it's easy to get complacent and see it as a prolonged vacation. But during such unprecedented times, is when business ideas are discussed and people take the initiative to work on their personal goals. This may or may not include setting yourself some fitness goals, understanding when to take a break or learning something new; be it cooking a new

dish or learning a new language. When setting your goals, aim for achievable targets so that you can monitor progress and celebrate successes. Setting weekly targets is a sure way to increase your chance of success. It's also important to remember to give yourself regular breaks and take time out for yourself.

3. Connect with your friends and family

If covid-19 has taught us anything, it is that life is short and inevitable. So, use this time to connect with family, and play catch-up with friends. There are lots of great applications which allow you to video call your loved ones, such as FaceTime, Zoom or even Skype. With your demanding work shifts, it may have been a while since you sat down with your parents or siblings to have quality time. So, take some time out to get involved in a weekly quiz, take part in fun online challenges or play online games together.

Your family is your support system now. Research shows despite financial worries, lockdown has strengthened many familial relationships. Spending time with your loved ones increases trust and strengthens the bond you have with them. All of which will likely have a positive effect on your mental health.

4. Use your anxiety strategies

During this stressful period, it's important to explore different techniques to help you manage your anxiety. You might find it calming to listen to music, podcasts or audiobooks when you go outside for your essential shopping. You could also try doing some breathing exercises or meditation to help calm you down before you leave the house or when you get back.

If you are feeling particularly anxious about something, reach out to those you trust and talk to them about how you are feeling. You may be surprised to find that many of your friends and family are experiencing the same worries. Find out what they're doing to help manage their concerns and see whether there are things you can do together.

And finally

Take advantage of lockdown by getting to know yourself better. Identify your strengths and take time to appreciate them. Rely on your strengths to get through the lockdown and consider ways you can use them more broadly when the pandemic is over. Adopting a proactive approach to protecting your mental health by creating a wellbeing plan will have immediate benefits. It will also reduce the likelihood of experiencing mental ill-health as we continue to grapple with the far-reaching consequences and implications of covid-19.

Christianah is a paralegal at Payne Hicks Beach in the family department.