

# COPING WITH COVID-19

# MENTAL HEALTH HANDBOOK

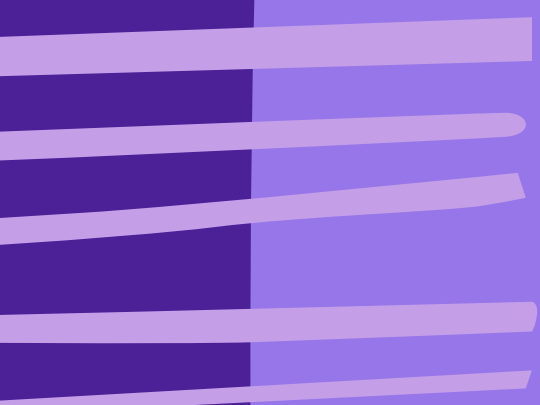
Trijog - Know Your Mind





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## LIFE DURING A PANDEMIC

It's a frightening time for many of us. We're in the midst of a worldwide pandemic, with cities and entire countries shutting down. All of us are watching the news headlines and wondering, "What's going to happen next?" For most people, the uncertainty of the situation is the hardest thing to handle. The uncertainty of the duration of the pandemic, their salary, a job and being at home. We don't know exactly how we'll be impacted or how bad things might get, which makes it all too easy to spiral out, into overwhelming dread and panic. This catastrophic thinking can significantly take a toll on your mind and body.

## HOW IS THE LOCKDOWN AFFECTING YOUR LIFE?

Challenges when working from home can take different forms. It might be challenging to physically find a quiet space where you can concentrate, separating care and work responsibilities, dealing with (pre-existing) anxiety or depression. To prevent, mitigate and eliminate challenges it is even more important that you are kind and generous towards yourselves and others. Look after yourself, neighbours and check on people at risk regularly. Those who are at risk or experiencing mental health and violence issues must not hesitate to seek professional help immediately. Schools and childcare centres being closed adds additional pressures on many families and parents' care responsibilities.

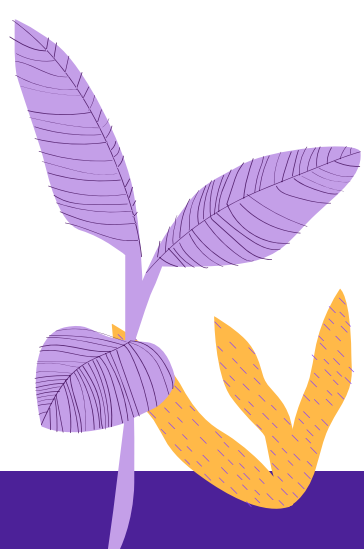
Information on how parents can maintain resilience and how to communicate with their children is essential at such times: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/getting-through-together/helpful-resources/>

## OUR EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS DURING THIS TIME

During these times of crisis our daily life has undergone a massive change, therefore it is possible that we might experience a range of emotions such as, anxiety, helplessness, confusion, fear, grief, relief, skepticism. Besides these emotions our behaviors may become reactive too, for example overly aggressive and angry, being irritable and restless, withdrawing and being aloof.

## MANAGING OUR EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIORS

These emotions and behaviours are reactive yet valid and we just need to acknowledge them and learn how to cope with them in a healthy manner.





# UNCERTAINTY

(when will this end?)

We are currently living in a time of uncertainty. Worrying gives you the illusion of certainty, as you may think it prepares you for the worst, so there are no surprises. After all, even Benjamin Franklin was heard to have said, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

**So let's try to see how we can help our minds deal with this uncertainty:**

**Focus on 'what now' rather than 'why'**

## Challenging uncertainty

- Can I ever really achieve certainty?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of demanding certainty?
- Do I predict bad things when I'm uncertain? Could good things be just as likely to happen?
- What is the probability of what I predict happening?
- Are there times I can tolerate uncertainty? What do I do then?
- How do others tolerate uncertainty? Can I learn from them?

## Accepting uncertainty

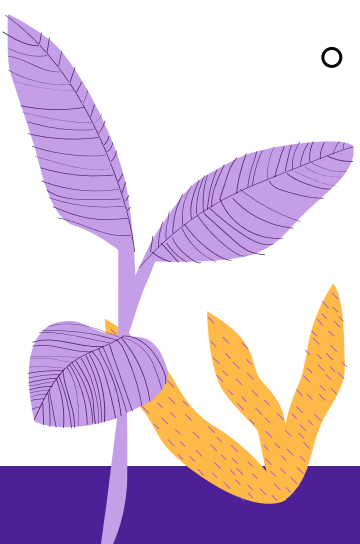
- Being aware of your need for certainty
- Not responding to this need by worrying, by instead just observing this need
- Making the decision to let go of this need and instead accept uncertainty
- Being focused on the present (i.e., breathing, bodily sensations, surroundings) to help achieve acceptance
- Refocusing your mind on the present moment, when it wanders back to needing certainty
- Understanding the probability of it not happening

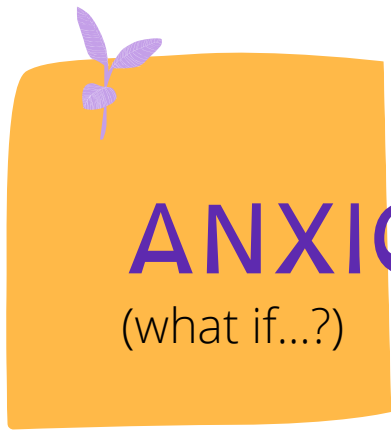
## Focus on rational rather than emotional responses and engage in active problem solving

- Find out who is available to answer your questions, provide accurate information and guide you. Stress from restrictions due to the pandemic, social restrictions, spending too much time alone, lack of alone time in a full house.

## Doing What Matters in Times of Stress:

- An Illustrated Guide is a stress management guide for coping with adversity. The guide aims to equip people with practical skills to help cope with stress. A few minutes each day are enough to practice the self-help techniques. The guide can be used along with the accompanying audio exercises.
- [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/9789240003927?gclid=Cj0KCQjwhtT1BRCiARIsAGIY51JiQgss7rn4z2h-xa6DQMBvkvz1mBB6ZDKkRTJoNQlwL7Qb\\_n7t3XkaAgNDEALw\\_wcB](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/9789240003927?gclid=Cj0KCQjwhtT1BRCiARIsAGIY51JiQgss7rn4z2h-xa6DQMBvkvz1mBB6ZDKkRTJoNQlwL7Qb_n7t3XkaAgNDEALw_wcB)





# ANXIOUSNESS

(what if...?)

Anxiety is an emotion that tends to seek out confirmation. While at times this can be validating, it can also intensify the emotion, leaving you feeling helpless and overwhelmed. Acknowledge your emotion with understanding, and then turn your mind to other things. Distraction is useful but doesn't always work.

**So let's try to see how we can help our minds deal with this anxiousness:**

**Staying informed through trusted sources. Steer clear from fake news and rumours.**

## Limit worry

- Lessen the time you spend watching or listening to upsetting media coverage. Take a break from watching the news and focus on the things that are positive in your life and things you have control over.

**"It's understandable that I am concerned about the current situation, AND I understand that worry is not an effective way to respond"**

- Be aware of how your body can reinforce anxiety. Do not stay in bed. Take time to breathe deeply. Take care of a pet or plant. Organise or clean your room. Stretch often. Make eye contact with others and smile. Do not keep discussing all the time about who got sick and how. Instead learn about who got well and recovered.

## Opposite of worry activities

- a. watching a comedy, reading a fun book, listening to upbeat music

## Worry Container ( activity )

- Picture in detail a container or box with a lid that closes.
- Find the thing in your mind that you are stuck worrying about.
- Imagine moving this from your mind and placing it firmly into the container.
- This box will hold whatever you place in it.
- Close the box and firmly move it to one side, perhaps placing it on a shelf.
- You can go back anytime you want and take the worry out, or you can leave it there, giving you space to focus on other things.
- Even when feeling afraid, try asking yourself: What is under my control? Am I unnecessarily worrying about the worst thing that can happen? When I have been stressed in the past, how have I managed? What are the things I can do to help myself and be positive?

## Avoid asking "what ifs":

- Focus on the Here and Now. It's not more, it's not less. Assumptions won't help. It's exactly what it is, let's accept things AS IS, focusing on the present. Celebrate the Power of Now.

## When You Feel Anxious Meditate





# SADNESS

(why us? why now?)

Depressive thoughts. Feelings of grief or powerlessness are common during times of crisis. This is mainly because there are currently very few things in our environment that we can control, as compared to earlier. Plans may be radically altered by the current circumstances. Try not to dwell in regret. Other rituals, forms of celebrating, ways of connecting, and memorable moments may well emerge from this situation. If you had old hobbies like painting, gardening or stitching, go back to them. Rediscover your hobbies. Inside emergency is the word emerge

## COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS

### THOUGHT AND EMOTION CONNECTION

Our thoughts determine our feelings and our behavior. How we think (cognition), how we feel (emotion) and how we act (behavior) all interact together. Therefore, negative and unrealistic thoughts can cause us distress and result in problems. When a person suffers with distress, the way in which they interpret situations becomes skewed, which in turn has a negative impact on the actions they take.

#### NEGATIVE THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS, AND BEHAVIOUR

##### ADVERSITY

You call your best friend. He/she doesn't call you back.



##### BELIEF

Have I done something wrong, are they angry with me?



##### CONSEQUENCE

Starting to get anxious and worried. You start to shake and cry.

#### POSITIVE THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS, AND BEHAVIOUR

##### ADVERSITY

You call your best friend. He/she doesn't call you back.



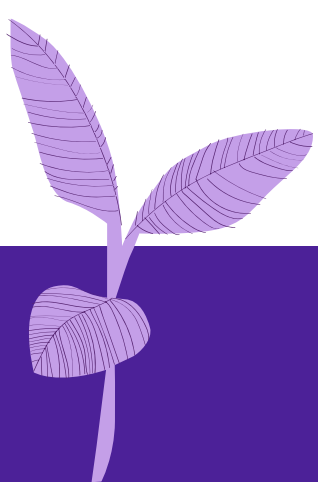
##### BELIEF

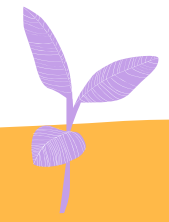
Maybe he/she hasn't checked their phone yet.



##### CONSEQUENCE

You feel ok but are starting to question why they haven't called you back.





## UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

Unhelpful thinking styles create the thoughts that contribute to negative feelings and patterns in our mind. Everyone has different styles that they predominantly struggle with as we pick them up over the course of our lives and they become a habit. They are cognitive distortions and will reinforce negative emotions. Here are 10 types of unhelpful thinking styles you may recognize in your own life.

### 1. Labelling

- Forming a negative judgement based on just a few qualities. "I misspelled the client's name. I'm so stupid."

### 2. All or Nothing

- Placing people or situations into either/or categories. There is no middle ground. "If I'm not perfect, I have failed."

### 3. Disqualifying the Positive

- Focusing on the negative by discounting good things that have happened. "She just said that to be nice."

### 4. Catastrophising

- Magnifying small negative incidents or minimizing positive events. "Now I'm going to lose my job, go bankrupt, and end up homeless."

### 5. Mental Filter

- Only focusing on the negative details while filtering out the positive aspects. "I got two needs improvement sections in my evaluation. I'm terrible at my job."

### 6. Overgeneralisation

- Creating a pattern out of a single experience or coming to a broad conclusion based on a piece of evidence. "Nothing good ever happens."

### 7. Jumping to Conclusions

- Imagining that we know what others are thinking. Also, predicting future outcomes. "Everyone is laughing at me."

### 8. Should Statements

- Using words like "should" or "must" to enforce ideas or rules for behaviour. "I should be cleaning the house."

### 9. Emotional Reasoning

- Assuming that feelings reflect fact about self or a situation. "I feel ugly, therefore I must actually be ugly."

### 10. Personalisation

- Blaming oneself for something out of his control. Also, blaming others for something that was one's fault. "If only I didn't leave the house at that time, this wouldn't have happened."

It's important to understand that these thoughts are inaccurate. Once we gain the awareness of their occurrence, we can begin to replace them with healthy, rational thinking

## JOURNALING

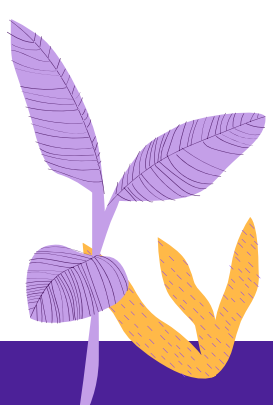
It helps one identify and change one's negative self-talk and unhelpful thinking styles in order to feel a more rational and healthy emotion.

## POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

It aids in developing a positive outlook towards life, self and others and enables healthy coping.

Some examples of positive self-statements are:

- I am safe and well.
- Things always work out for good.
- Problems are opportunities for personal growth.
- I embrace the chance to handle this situation well, and I move through all challenges with grace.
- I am happy, calm, and free from worry.
- I am a positive person who attracts positive things into my life. I am equipped to handle this situation effectively.
- My body and mind feel calm and peaceful.
- I am at peace with all that has happened, is happening, and will happen.



# COPING STRATEGIES

## (PERSONAL)



### MEDITATION, MINDFULNESS, AND RELAXATION

#### GUIDED MEDITATION:

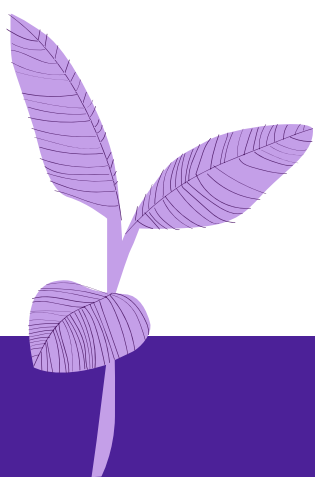
You could listen to guided meditation online or follow a procedure given below.

Sample of a guided meditation script. You can read out this script to yourself or have another member of the family read it out to you. Alternatively, you can use it by recording it in your own/loved one's voice and listen to it.

You can read out this script to yourself or have another member of the family read it out to you. Alternatively, you can use it by recording it in your own/loved one's voice and listen to it.

- Take in a deep breath and gently close your eyes. Easily imagine these scenes while you continue to breathe in slowly and calmly.
- See yourself relaxing by a beautiful, calm lake. The breeze softly blows over the lake and you watch the thousands of tiny ripples it creates on the surface of the lake.
- Your surroundings here are so calm and pleasant that it brings a feeling of complete peace that washes over your entire body and mind. You breathe in deeply and allow the peacefulness to fill you. You notice the birds singing in the trees.... softly chirping and singing songs of their simple happiness.
- Take the time now to release any worries, any disturbing thoughts, any sadness you may be feeling. Let those feelings float up, out and away... floating far away. Whatever has happened today that has bothered you, it is time to let that go.
- Know that you are really in control of your mind and your body. You can choose to allow these bothersome emotions to leave. In doing so, you will free up space in your heart and mind for positive things to come.
- Life is all about creating what you want and choosing good thoughts that make you feel good. When you focus on the positive, you get more positive experiences in your life. Releasing any negative thoughts serves like an umbrella on a rainy day – sure the rain is there, but it doesn't have to affect you.
- In your mind's eye – picture yourself now in a stormy rainy situation. As you open up your umbrella of positivity, you see how you are really protected from all that is going on outside.
- You are safe. You don't have to be a part of rainy difficulties. It truly is your choice how you react to whatever comes your way.
- Know that you have all the tools you need within, just choose to use them. You can see your life from a happy perspective. Worry, disturbing thoughts, or sadness are choices of thoughts you think, and you can simply say, "no" to them.
- Release all the things that have been stressful to you and you can make peace with yourself. Make peace now with the amazing person that you truly are on inside. Nurture yourself with your loving thoughts – release any negative images or ideas about yourself. You have a choice in what you believe. Your mind is your greatest asset and your best tool.
- Now take in a deep breath, allow good feelings to fill up your heart and your mind.... peacefulness and calm are all around you.
- Open your eyes when you are ready and stretch fully.

Author: Green Child Magazine







## APPS (CALM, HEADSPACE), YOUTUBE

Progressive Muscle Relaxation will help you to lower your overall tension and stress levels, and help you relax when you are feeling anxious. It can also help reduce physical problems such as stomach-aches and headaches, as well as improve your sleep.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ih002wUzgkc>

Cosmic Kids Yoga and Mindfulness is a YouTube page with yoga, mindfulness, and relaxation videos designed for your kids.

- <https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga/featured>

UCSD Center for Mindfulness is providing daily streams and recordings of mindfulness and compassion sessions to help cope with the current situation.

- <https://medschool.ucsd.edu/som/fmph/research/mindfulness/pages/default.aspx>

Loyola University RELAX Online is an interactive tool, narrated by Counseling Center Staff, that features videos, soothing visuals, and music.

- <https://www.loyola.edu/department/counseling-center/students/relaxation>

## VISUALISATION

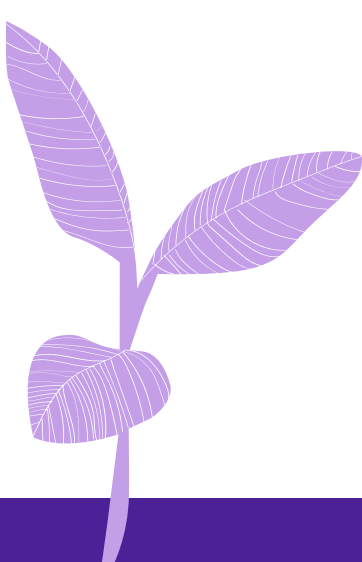
- Imagine yourself in a beautiful place that you love. Perhaps it's your favorite place to watch the sunset, a stream, a lush forest, a secret beach, or a field of wildflowers. Invite all of your senses to imagine yourself there. Hear the evening crickets, feel the sand in between your toes, and smell the flowers. The power of the mind is that we can travel back in time to visit a good memory and experience the positive feelings in the present moment

## 5-4-3-2-1 GROUNDING EXERCISE

- When you're feeling anxious, pause and settle your mind by naming:
  - 5 things you can see
  - 4 things you can hear
  - 3 things you can touch
  - 2 things you can smell
  - 1 thing you can taste

## BREATHING EXERCISE

- Inhale slowly through the nose to the count of three. Place your attention on the expansion of your chest and the sound of your breath. Pause at the top of your inhale for another two seconds. Rather than holding your breath think of it as resting your breath. (The idea of holding often causes us to tense up, and we want to try to relax before the exhale). Now slowly exhale and let go of all of the air in your lungs for a count of six, keeping your jaw relaxed. Keep going for a few more rounds. Experiment with different counts that feels nourishing for you. Go down by a count of 1 in each part if you're feeling any stress or strain. If it feels easy, you can try increasing each section by a count of one. Bring a hint of a smile to your lips helps to relax your jaw.



## GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Set a daily reminder. Set a timer for 1-10 minutes of journaling. Pick a topic or find prompts on the internet.

Examples:

- What small thing that happened today are you grateful for?
- Who do you like to spend time with and why?
- What about your body are you grateful for?

'Psychologists find that, over time, feeling grateful boosts happiness and fosters both physical and psychological health, even among those already struggling with mental health problems. Studies show that practicing gratitude curbs the use of words expressing negative emotions and shifts inner attention away from such negative emotions as resentment and envy, minimizing the possibility of ruminating, which is a hallmark of depression' People who are grateful feel less pain, less stress, suffer insomnia less, have stronger immune systems, experience healthier relationships, and do better academically and professionally.

## KEEP CONNECTED

Maintaining social networks can help maintain a sense of normalcy and provide valuable outlets for sharing feelings and relieving stress. Communication can help you to connect with family and friends. Call up people whom you haven't spoken to and surprise them. Discuss happy events, common interests, exchange cooking tips, share music. Netflix Party is a Chrome extension for watching Netflix remotely with friends. It synchronises video playback and adds group chat. Houseparty is the face-to-face social network where you can connect and play games with others. Zoom. Whatsapp. Skype. Telephone. Virtual dance party. Family/friends dinner via conference call.

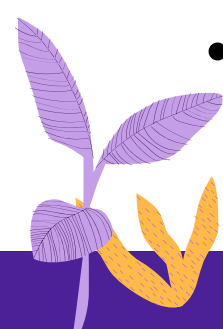
## IRRITATION BUSTER

Find the source. Acknowledge it is making you irritable. Think about the bigger picture. Be compassionate with yourself. Imagine a hug from someone who cares about you. Once you feel a little better, use your compassion to consider how it has made those around you feel, and how important it is to not take it out on them. Communicate with others. Set boundaries.

# SELF CARE

Self-care activities are critical to our mental health and emotional well-being. When you prioritize yourself, you not only ensure you are the best "you" possible, but you also reinvigorate yourself. You have more energy and joy to give in other areas of your life.

- Develop a regular sleep routine.
- Aim for a healthy diet.
- Take lunch breaks.
- Go for a walk at lunchtime.
- Take a short walk at home during lunchtime.
- Take your dog for a walk after work.
- Play with your pet.
- Use your sick leave.
- Get some exercise before/after work regularly.
- Prioritise close relationships in your life e.g. with partners, family and children.
- Keep a reflective journal.
- Seek and engage in external supervision or regularly consult with a more experienced colleague.
- Turn off your email and work phone outside of work hours.
- Make time for relaxation.
- Make time to engage with positive friends and family.
- Develop friendships that are supportive.
- Write three good things that you did each day.
- Play board games with the family
- Play a sport and have a coffee together after training.
- Go to the movies or do something else you enjoy.
- Keep meeting with your parents' group or other social group.
- Talk to your friend about how you are coping with work and life demands.
- Engage in reflective practices like meditation.
- Go to church/mosque/temple. Do yoga.
- Reflect with a close friend for support
- Engage with a non-work hobby.
- Begin and end work on time every day.



Schedule time to focus on your needs, even if you feel like you don't have time, try to make self-care a priority. When you're caring for all of the aspects of yourself, you'll find that you can operate more effectively and efficiently and you will feel much happier.

Remember, you can't pour from an empty cup.



## COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

### DE-CATASTROPHISING

We are quick to jump to the worst case scenarios and build stories around it. Ask yourself, what is the probability of my worst case scenario actually coming true. Change your self-talk to "the situation is bad but I will be able to cope with it/ am developing the skills to cope with it."

### SELF-COMPASSION

Encouraging self-talk that is kind and compassionate rather than self-downing/berating and accepting self unconditionally with flaws and strengths. Statements like "I am an idiot," "I am a loser," "I am a failure" make a person feel extremely depressed and unmotivated. Instead say "I have failed in this project/task but it doesn't make me a complete failure." Speak to yourself in a particular situation as you would speak with the person you love the most (best friend, sibling, child).

### CHALLENGING NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

Use the "Think Technique" to challenge your own negative thoughts. Are these thoughts True? Helpful? Inspiring? Necessary? Kind? Is there any evidence to prove this thought? How does this thought allow me to move towards my goals? What are the ways in which it's harming me? Asking these questions, helps us realise them.

### THOUGHTS ARE JUST THOUGHTS

Thoughts are NOT facts. They are like moving clouds or traffic. You can choose to not focus on every passing thought. Allow them to move by without trying to stop them or engage with them and without any judgement. Acknowledge it and focus on the task at hand.

## GENERAL STRATEGIES

### ROUTINE MANAGEMENT

Regular eating, sleeping, exercise routines, indulging in hobbies, pleasurable activities and self-care activities. Develop a new routine.

### PROBLEM SOLVING

Exploring various practical problem solving tips and options. Write down specific worries about how the virus/problem may disrupt your life and make a list of all possible solutions. Don't get hung up on "perfect" options, rather achievable ones and develop an action plan.

### TIME MANAGEMENT

Right time management technique helps to boost productivity. Maintain to-do list, be prioritized, be focused, be structured and be self aware. But don't forget to review.

### BALANCE FAMILY, WORK AND ME TIME

Be aware of your "me time" and give importance to it. Try to maintain some family time together which will help to develop healthy family relationships and fix your working hours, allocate a specific work-time.



# BEING PRODUCTIVE WHILE WORKING FROM HOME

## KNOW WHAT IS EXPECTED

When working remotely it is important to be clear about what work you are expected to carry out, especially if this differs from your usual tasks and duties. Talk to your manager and possibly write down what you are working on and what you will be able to deliver over a certain period of time. Getting agreement will provide you, your manager and your team with certainty

## DISPLAY SELF COMPASSION FOR LACK OF PRODUCTIVITY

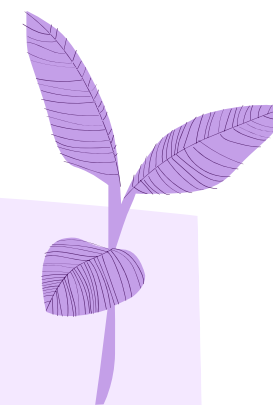
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## KEEP IN TOUCH

Stay in touch with your manager and your team. There are lots of different ways you can do this. You may want to think about setting up regular video calls with colleagues. You can also use email, phone and chat groups like. You should also stay in touch with your union delegates or organisers for any help or developments about what is happening. Keeping in touch is important to ensure you, your colleagues and your manager are informed about each other's work. It is also important to avoid loneliness and other negative mental health effects of being socially isolated.

## WORK REGULAR HOURS

It can be hard to stick to set hours when working from home due to a more flexible working regime. Domestic distractions, care responsibilities and blurred boundaries between work and time off can be difficult to navigate. Follow your usual working patterns and stick to a routine where possible. Some might find it useful to keep a diary or use an online hours calculator to ensure good discipline around working hours. It is a good idea to proactively communicate your working hours to others in your team.



The mind is a powerful force. It can enslave us or empower us. It can plunge us into depths of misery, or take us to heights of ecstasy. Learn to use the power wisely.

Trijog helping you learn to claim and consciously use the power of your mind.

**YOU MATTER  
YOUR MIND MATTERS  
AT TRIJOG EVERY MIND MATTERS**

REACH OUT



+91 9619196949 / +91 9619411252



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(microsite link)