

MENTAL RESILIENCE

DURING COVID LOCKDOWN

Having the ability to adapt to difficult situations is Resilience. It is when you are able to keep functioning psychologically even when adversity, trauma, stress or a period of crisis, like the Covid lockdown, strikes.

This is not to say that the feeling of grief, pain and anger is not experienced but being able to walk through all of it means that you are resilient.

IMPORTANCE OF BEING

**MENTALLY
RESILIENT**

The benefits of mental resilience cannot be over-emphasized.

- It improves your ability to cope with negative situations and regulate emotions.
- It prevents mental health conditions like anxiety and depression.
- It helps develop greater resistance to stress.

Mental resilience is not in-born but developed, and on this note, I will be informing you of some habits that can help you build your mental resilience.

HABITS THAT CAN HELP BUILD YOUR

MENTAL RESILIENCE

Here are some of strategies to help you build mental resilience:

CREATE A SCHEDULE

Routine is key! Ensure you plan your working day accordingly and include all meal breaks as you would in the office. Everyday ensure you do things that can give you a sense of fulfilment.



SET GOALS

Putting in mind that this lockdown is not forever, continue to create future goals for yourself – plan your next adventure post lockdown. Setting these goals helps you look towards the future with hope.



CREATE A REWARD SYSTEM

Try to do all the challenging and hard work before you decide to sit down to watch your favourite television show. Having a good reward system for achieving your set goals keeps you motivated



DON'T STOP MOVING

Being at home means you will move around less. Losing your usual day-to-day activities will also mean you naturally lose basic exercise and fresh air that you would normally be getting on your commute to and from work and generally being outside the house. Try to exercise at least 20 minutes a day (even if it's just a walk). Exercise stimulates endorphins, which are “happy hormones” -- they make us “feel good.” Getting the body moving in any capacity can help decrease body tension, which may contribute to anxiety.

Studies have shown that one vigorous exercise can help alleviate symptoms of anxiety for hours, and a regular schedule may significantly reduce them over time. But while vigorous exercise isn't for everyone, particularly when under pressure, psychologists studying how exercise relieves anxiety suggested that even a 10-minute walk could be effective in alleviating symptoms.



GOOD SLEEP HABITS

Having a good sleep habit helps you to build resilience. When you are tired and exhausted, you feel a lot more stressed, and small problems seem bigger. Ensure that you separate your work time from sleep time. Don't turn your bed into your work-station this may confuse your sleep schedule because when it comes time to actually sleep your mind believes it should be actively in 'workmode.'



Ensure you're getting enough sleep – this may require between 7 and 9 hours, but ample sleep will help you to stay focussed, increase concentration, regulate emotion and minimise stress. If you're having difficulty sleeping, try downloading a sleep app on your phone and start monitoring your sleep cycles to see what you could improve on. The key to a good night's sleep for a healthy adult is 8 hours of sleep per night where 1-2 of those hours are in deep sleep. Research more about deep sleep if you feel you are getting enough hours but aren't feeling 'refreshed' when you wake up.

GOOD EATING HABITS

Eating healthy will be essential to mental resilience. This is not to say that you have to change your diet during lockdown, but be mindful that you're getting enough fruits, vegetables, grains and proteins. If you're tired or not getting enough sleep, it's natural for your body to crave sugary foods to help boost your focus and attention. This may be helpful in the short-term, but is not sustainable and will only lead to a crash later on. Choosing healthier options throughout the day will benefit your mind and body in the long-run.



CREATE BALANCE

Just because you're at home more often, doesn't mean you should be working more, or feeling pressured to pick up a new language, or start training for the next Ninja Warrior. Ensure you are spending just as much if not more time doing the things you enjoy and that help you to relax. There is a fair amount of pressure amounting where people feel as though they should be utilising this 'extra' time to undertake new ventures. However, without balance, motivation is difficult to continue even the simplest tasks. So, take it easy and take as much time to tune out as you require.



KEEP IN TOUCH WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

This lockdown period is a very good time to be in touch with friends and loved ones. We all need each other at this time, so building strong and positive relationships can give the needed support. You can also connect with people online in the community to form new relationships. Again, don't feel pressured to connect with people, but sociability is important to remember.

You can also find simple online activities you can do with family and friends, such as trivia, games or online board games.



SELF-CARE

Find something to help you relax and unwind. Find your meditation. The reason I say find “your” meditation is because everyone is different. While one person may find yoga to be meditative, another may find reading a book to be just as effective. When searching for your outlet, find something that helps you to relax. If meditation is something you find frustrating because you’ve never been able to do it, simply find something you can do quietly to relax that might be more practical. Try to build your toolbox of meditative outlets that you



DECREASE NEGATIVITY

If you find yourself feeling affected or triggered by negative news and social media – try disconnecting from them from time to time. You can catch up on news at times when you feel absolute necessary, but perhaps disconnecting from it on a regular basis might help to prevent you from becoming indulged in the fear-mongering headlines and online debates. Furthermore, there are other ways of reducing content by ‘muting’ people on Instagram or ‘hiding’ people from Facebook whom you would like to minimise seeing their content. This may be a helpful way of reducing unwanted content without having to remove people altogether.



BE PROACTIVE IN SOLVING PROBLEMS

Don't overlook your problems, rather understand that they are temporary and that you have what it takes to make it through. Try to develop strategies that can help solve the problem at hand rather than waiting for the problem to solve itself or take a toll on your emotions.



USE POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Positive self-talk can be very powerful in combating anxiety. Anxiety, when present, can often lead to negative thoughts. Perhaps this is a good time to let you know just how powerful your mind is. Experts estimate that the mind comes up with 60,000 – 80,000 thoughts a day – amazing, right? Thankfully, we have a choice of whether to harbour the negative thoughts or embrace the positive ones.

Using positive affirmations is a good place to start to remember what you are capable of

Here are some examples:

“I can take things one step at a time,”

“Anxiety does not define me.”

“I am in control.”

“I’ve made it through this before, and I can do it again.”

“This is only temporary,”



ASK FOR HELP

You cannot do it all by yourself. The most resilient people reach out and ask for help when needed. There's a common saying that "a problem shared is a problem solved." Learn to ask for help when you feel the need to.

If you're not coping, speak to someone you can trust. This may be a colleague, a supervisor at work or a professional. Remember that you're not alone in this and that people are here to help you if you need it.

MeHelp is available to you and is available most days for your convenience. Alternatively, you may also want to reach out to various helplines such as Lifeline **13 11 14** or Beyond Blue **1300 22 4636**.

As humans, we are very adaptable, and as quickly as we adapted to life inside the house, we will very quickly re-adapt to life outside again, but this may take some time to achieve. Having the right supports in place will be very important to ensure your mental health needs are met during this transition. The use of telehealth is a great option to talk to a professional if your anxiety becomes unmanageable.

