



Feeling blue?

How to cope with lockdown

Welcome to PhysioBiz, with healthcare advice and information you can trust and rely on, brought to you by the South African Society of Physiotherapy!

If you're snapping at your spouse, being short-tempered with your children and tough on the dog; if you're liable to feel tears in your eyes at the slightest thing; if your dreams are full of anxiety; you're not alone.

Being in lockdown has documented mental impacts:

In late February 2020, right before European countries mandated various forms of lockdowns, The Lancet published a review of 24 studies documenting the psychological impact of quarantine (the "restriction of movement of people who have potentially been exposed to a contagious disease"). The findings offer a glimpse of what is brewing in hundreds of millions of households around the world.

In short, and perhaps unsurprisingly, people who are quarantined are very likely to develop a wide range of symptoms of psychological stress and disorder, including low mood, insomnia, stress, anxiety, anger, irritability, emotional exhaustion, depression and post-traumatic stress symptoms. Low mood and irritability specifically stand out as being very common, the study notes. (From an article on weforum.org, the website of the World Economic Forum)

Chinese researchers began collecting info about the mental health impacts early on, and it's clear that for some people, the fear and the restrictions around SARS-CoV2 can be overwhelming – one team of researchers found acute post-traumatic stress syndrome in some people.

"Fortunately, if you know you're at risk of impacts like anxiety and low mood, you can do things to counteract the risk," says Rogier van Bever Donker, President of the South African Society of Physiotherapy. Our top tips include:

- Keep in touch with friends, family and work colleagues.
- Don't watch news and social media for more than an hour a day. Keep your mental health in balance by reading books that take you out of yourself and your situation, or watching good movies.
- Give yourself a treat at regular intervals. "No, we don't mean chocolates or crisps!" says van Bever Donker. "Things like warm bubble baths or time spent on a rewarding hobby, instead of trying to set a cracking pace working from home or completing all your home chores. You need to give yourself time out."
- One of the best cures for low mood is to help someone else. Reach out to someone you think might be having an especially hard time; sew masks for charities; or find a way to donate food to the many, many people who are in need. "Google for NGOs in your area, or ask people on Facebook to help you find a way of helping," says van Bever Donker.
- And whatever you do, look after your physical wellbeing. If you've finally flattened the banana bread curve, your own curves may be looking alarming! "One of the most effective remedies for anxiety, stress and mild depression is movement," says van Bever Donker. "Even in lockdown, it's possible to get exercise. If you're not sweating enough vacuuming, mopping, painting or varnishing, go to our website at www.saphysio.co.za for some ideas for exercise in limited space, or visit the websites of organisations like the World Health Organisation for ideas. You can also find loads of online classes given by personal trainers, or yoga and Pilates instructors."

Look after yourselves. And remember, your physiotherapist is a phone call away if you need advice on pain, exercise and other issues. Go to www.saphysio.co.za for more info.

References

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/this-is-the-psychological-side-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-that-were-ignoring/>

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.03.06.20032425v1.full.pdf>