

# How to Beat the “Quarantine Blues”

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It’s normal, and even expected, to feel more sad or anxious during these challenging and disruptive times. Let’s face it—the restrictions of quarantined life, loss of normalcy, and uncertainty about the future are starting to wear on all of us.

## Some Symptoms of “Quarantine Blues”

- Feelings of sadness, apathy, or bouts of irritability
- Increased anxiety and worry
- Problems concentrating
- Difficulties sleeping
- Low energy and decreased motivation
- Changes in appetite or increased emotional eating
- Withdrawing from social connections (family and friends)
- Overusing alcohol or drugs

If you’ve got a case of the blues, you are not alone! Here are some steps you can take to help you feel better.

## Ways to Combat The “Quarantine Blues”

**Move more.** I know it is hard to feel motivated when you are feeling down, but physical activity can improve your mood. Try to fit in some activities on most days. Plan short walks, climb stairs, or do an online exercise class. Research shows that regular exercise can be as effective as taking an antidepressant, and it releases “feel good” chemicals in the body (like serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins). *Being active is good for both your mental and physical health!*

**Stick to healthy routines.** At a time when so much is out of our control, keeping a routine and schedule can help us feel more positive and grounded. For example, *good sleep* is essential for your mental health (7-9 hours per day for adults). Avoid staying up late and get some much-needed rest on a regular basis. Furthermore, emotional or stress eating can be an issue these days. *Plan regular balanced meals and snacks* to keep cravings and overindulgences at bay.

**Get out of your head!** It’s a dangerous place to live! These days we are spending more time in our heads, and with fewer distractions to interrupt negative thinking. Unfortunately, this can contribute to depressed mood and anxiety. *Distract yourself* and plan things to do when you find yourself in a mental rut. Try reaching out to a friend, working on a hobby, or just getting outside for a change of scenery. *Fitting enjoyable activities into your routine can short-circuit negative thinking and bolster your mood!*

**Keep hope alive.** Some of the pandemic-related restrictions are starting to loosen up. So, keep the faith! Slowly start resuming the “normal” activities you can. Go for a walk or a bike ride, work on your garden, or get a coffee and check out your neighborhood. (Observe safety guidelines as you do of course!). *Stay focused on the freedoms you do have, and the things you can do, to feel more positive.*

**Volunteer your time.** Giving your time to others can change your focus and help boost your mood. There are “low contact” volunteer opportunities through non-profit organizations both online and in your community. Even though you may feel depleted some days, the simple act of helping someone else can energize you and lift your spirits. So, why not get involved and give back.

**Get support.** People experience less stress and anxiety when they have proper support. There are many free online support groups (e.g., for depression, anxiety, and substance abuse) on Facebook and other platforms. Many therapists are now doing “virtual” therapy; and places of worship are offering online services and support. Online mental health options are available, so don’t be afraid to reach out for help!

**Lastly, try to remain hopeful. *We will get through this.*** Take good care of yourself and use some of these tips to keep the “quarantine blues” at bay! Please note: If you feel depressed on a regular basis and struggle to get through your day, you may benefit from talking to a doctor, a psychologist, or other mental health care provider such as services offered through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to give you the support you need.