

We've gone from voluntary social distancing to mandatory social isolation and each one of us is embracing this time period in a different way. With our usual life goals being driven by our desire to thrive and not just survive, to live and not just exist, switching to this survival mode that we're all currently in is more than likely to exacerbate or cause overwhelming stress, crippling anxiety and debilitating depression.

While it may seem like the world is out to get you, it is not. Life as we know it is no longer the same, and it is okay to feel sad about it. When the only thing that seems certain right now is the uncertainty that looms over our every day, we're all slowly realising that the control we think we have on our lives is, after all, just an illusion. Trust yourself to be able to overcome this stressful period. Inhale. Exhale. This too shall pass. And till it does, here are some ways to get through it.

FEEL YOUR FEELINGS

While it is wonderful if you are embracing the lockdown days positively and using this time to learn new things, it is also perfectly okay not to. It is a scary time and you have every right to feel your feelings. Emotions are okay. Crying is okay. Feeling vulnerable is okay. Feeling scared is okay. It is okay not to be okay.

This is not the time for us to be keeping up with the Joneses. Just because your neighbour is posting workout videos, your cousin is cooking up a storm, your friend is learning a new language or your colleagues are preparing to launch their side hustle, doesn't mean that you have to do the same. This time is not a rat race. It is time to pause and reflect. It is time to focus on your relationships. It is time to focus on your mental health.



Picture: Getty Images

REDEFINE IMPORTANT

It has been so easy till now, in the hustle and bustle of daily life, to blur the lines between important and urgent. The daily to-do lists in our head or on paper, at home or at work, have driven us to choose urgent over important. Most of the time this sense of urgency has had a say in, or even dictated, what we define as priority in our lives.

With life as usual at a standstill and replaced with a new normal, we are compelled to reflect upon and redefine what we consider important. And here self-care and mental wellness top the list. Why? Because if you do not take care of yourself, you will not be able to take care of your loved ones. If you're stressed, anxious and depressed, and have no healthy coping mechanisms, how will you help loved ones who may be facing the same or other mental health issues?

Being cooped up in one specific location for weeks, with or without family, is bound to put us under pressure and affect our mental health. While we adapt to a new, temporary, collective normal, it has never been more important to pay attention to our emotions and relationships.

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around the same people 24x7 for an extended period of time may well be giving you cabin fever. Every family will have its own unique set of challenges. What about family disagreements? Articulate your issues, do not mimic escalating behaviour like shouting, agree to disagree if possible, don't be confrontational, and always be

respectful, even when you're arguing. Especially since you can't slam the door and go outside.



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TIES WITH CHILDREN: Whether you have young children or teenagers, schedule some

FOCUS ON YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

RELATIONSHIP WITH YOURSELF: This is the time when we realise that each day counts. Each moment counts. It is an opportunity to build and rebuild our relationships, to repair and restore what has been broken, to make a fresh start. And you need to start with yourself.

Who are you? A parent, a sibling, a child, a friend, a spouse, a partner, an employee, a boss, a caregiver... the list goes on.

While the roles you play in your life are of course important, don't limit yourself within them. Remember you do have an identity beyond the social, familial, and professional roles you play. Set aside some me time to introspect daily. What is your usual internal monologue? Are you being your own best friend? Spend some much-needed time alone with your thoughts.

RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY: We love our families but being

time to just talk to them. Activities are of course fun and good for bonding, but your children just want to be heard. Listen attentively and you may well become their trusted friend too.

RELATIONSHIP WITH SPOUSE: The crumbling of usual routines may have resulted in both you and your partner working from home. To make this sudden transition to being co-workers and sharing a co-working space easier, set up a work schedule with a fixed start and stop time. And don't forget to pencil in coffee breaks.

RELATIONSHIP WITH ELDERLY PARENTS: When it comes to elderly parents, understand that they may be out of their depth and quite out of their comfort zone, so don't trivialise their concerns. Don't dismiss them or what they have to say. Encourage them to express their feelings and assuage any fears you can. This is even more important for seniors with Alzheimer's and dementia.