

## COVID-19 / Coronavirus Advice and Support Dr Phil Lurie, Clinical Psychologist

### Handout 2. Living Meaningfully in Social Isolation

Feeling trapped can make us feel helpless in improving our situation and that we must limit our activities. It is important to continue doing activities that give us purpose and fulfilment in order to improve our mental well-being. Here is some advice to help manage this:

#### WHAT IS A MEANINGFUL LIFE?

A question we should ask ourselves constantly throughout our lives is as follows:

**“Despite the limitations, am I living the most meaningful life I can right now?”**

We always have limitations, including social isolation, but this should not prevent us from working towards health, well-being, and continuing to pursue purposeful activity.

- What are my limitations?

There are two types of limitations in our lives:

1. Practical - e.g. isolation, and a lack of resources, time, money or energy.
2. Perceptual - e.g. self-doubt, fear, insecurity, criticism, and a lack of motivation or confidence.

Our job is to either overcome these limitations by resolving them, or to accept them and work on acting towards ‘the people we want to be’ despite their presence.

- Be creative

Practical limitations can be overcome by finding new ways of engaging in meaningful activity. For example, instead of the gym can we work out at home? Can we video-call friends instead of meeting?

- Accept the situation

We will always have limitations, and social isolation is a big test for all of us, if not the biggest. Of course, this can be a scary and worrisome time, but we deserve to look after our well-being. We should ask ourselves the following question:

**“If I look back at my time in social isolation, how would I have wanted to spend it best?”**

Devote time thinking about how best to use this period of your life by listing all the activities and projects that you want to engage in.

- Maintain life domains

List the areas of life that are meaningful (e.g. work, hobbies, health, friends, community, learning, family etc.) and make a list of activities that can fulfil these (again, allowing for some limitations).

- List my values

Consider what my qualities are (e.g. creativity, determination, empathy etc.) and write a list of activities that demonstrate these. For example, offering help to vulnerable people demonstrates ‘compassion’.

- Embrace the situation

Outside of our responsibilities, we might have more time to try new activities that we have previously put off, e.g. cooking, learning a language etc. Consider devoting time to a new and meaningful challenge rather than engaging in anxiety-provoking behaviours such as repeatedly checking the news.

#### MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Value well-being

We can only focus on meaningful activity if we are physically and mentally well. Exercise, eat and sleep well, keep in contact with others, and always seek support if you feel depressed or anxious.

We collectively face difficult times with Coronavirus, and I would like to offer ONLINE support to anyone experiencing low mood, anxiety, worry and/or panic or other difficulties. It is especially important to talk to a professional if you are concerned about the mental health effects of potential/actual isolation. Please contact me at [skypeclinicalpsychologist@gmail.com](mailto:skypeclinicalpsychologist@gmail.com) for more.