

Due to COVID-19, I am currently offering a variety of video or phone sessions as a collective effort to practice social distancing.

## Tips for Navigating the Storm

We may not have control over a worldwide virus, but we do have a greater degree of control over our behavior and our thoughts than we might realize.

So, here are a few things to consider doing and some perspectives you might choose to take:

**Exercise** - we know that exercise is essential for good health, both physical and emotional.

Exercise alone if you're able to motivate yourself, use a YouTube video to get a structured session, find an online yoga class or exercise routine, or go for a walk (in a natural context, not around others).

**Do That Thing You've Always Wanted to Do** - being at home does not have to be boring. It's your perspective about being at home that *you can control*.

How many times have you said, "I wish I had the time to..."  
Well, now could be "the time."

**Here are just a few examples from the mundane to the intellectually stimulating:**

- Clean out/organize closets and/or drawers
- Organize your photos
- Go through your e-mails and throw out all those old ones
- Clean up all those apps and folders sitting on your mobile devices or computers
- Binge watch a favorite show
- Catch up on movies
- Color/draw/paint
- Read a book
- Write a book
- Learn a language
- Take an online course in a topic of interest to you
- Develop a new skill
- Pick up that musical instrument you've had at home and play
- Call people you haven't talked to in a long time
- Start a gratitude journal for those things you're grateful for during these hard times
- Reach out to others online - join a virtual book club or simply connect with friends for a virtual cup of coffee

**What to do with kids at home:**

First and foremost, kids often do best with routines and schedules. If they are now home, and not in school, parents will need to create that structure.

Make calendars, make daily schedules, have kids participate in making these so they are invested in the process. Having worked with children on the autism spectrum for many years, I've made more schedules than I can count. But for those of you less likely to create your own schedules, you may find some of these charts helpful:

You can do an online search for many more ideas and articles about what to do with kids at home but here's a start to generating some ideas:

Create a scavenger hunt around the house

Teach organizational skills by helping kids organize their rooms

Learn a new skill together online

Cook together, bake together, use the time to connect and teach concepts

Craft time -the ideas here are endless with lots of ideas in online searches "crafts for kids"

Color together or encourage independent time to then share what has been done.

Create a story or a photo album about their lives

Remember kids (and many adults too) do best with structure. If you want them to engage in an activity for a period of time (so you can get something done), then use a timers or clock to help kids understand how long they will engage in a particular activity.

Play cards

Play word games

Play board games

Make a board game

Plant a garden, even in small pots indoors

Write a letter, draw a picture to send to a grandparent or family friend

Listen to music

Dance!

### **Accessing Agency, Especially in the Chaos**

Has your world been turned upside down? It could easily feel like your secure base, human connections, and clarity of expectations have been involuntarily ripped right out from under you. These uncertain times can easily leave you feeling helpless, lonely, and unable to make the impact you want. But there is another way. Accessing Agency is your to exercise resilience, adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. As much as resilience involves "bouncing back" from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal growth.

Here are some ways to dial your focus in, to switch gears when needed, to re-energize your body and brain, to oscillate for mental agility, and then to effectively transition from being able to move around in the outside world to shutting down to engage in things internally.

Accessing Agency doesn't happen by chance; it's the by-product of applying proven strategies. Whether this relates to working remotely, doing at home schooling, or just adjusting to social distancing, here is a simple approach you can easily start applying NOW.

### Start Your Day Right

When life was 'normal', you probably didn't think twice about whether you would stay in or go outside. All that has changed. Start your day with a "Daily Morning Routine" (meditation, gratitude journaling, gentle stretching, etc.) to invest in your own energy, activate your brain, reduce pain/stress, and prepare yourself for a high impact day Then, take a quick walk around the block where you perform your home to work-at-home transition (or school-at-home, etc.). During this transition, you can identify your critical agenda items for the day, listen to an uplifting podcast or inspiring music, and prepare yourself mentally and emotionally for the day.

Throughout the day, focus on this High Performance and Resiliency approach:

#### **1. Be proactive and strategic whenever possible**

Even in times of chaos, there are predictable meetings and events that you already know about. Prioritize these ahead of time, be clear about who you need to be in these moments and decide how you will show up at your best.

#### **2. Take common, non-urgent decisions off the table**

Anywhere you can systemize your day, you should. For example, write out what you are going to do when you wake up, what you will eat for each meal, what time you will eat, what time you will go to bed, what your bedtime ritual will be, etc. When you clear your brain of these non-critical decisions, you are freeing up your prefrontal cortex to be a problem solver. Also having a concrete schedule to follow during these times of uncertainty and ambiguity will serve to anchor you.

#### **3. Be your best at your critical moments**

The easiest way to do this is to set clear intentions. Asking yourself a few simple questions has a profound way of setting you up for success and helping you create a clear and uncluttered mind. The three key questions (when interacting with others, especially in relation to working relationships):

- \_How do I want to be perceived?
- \_What do I want them to know?
- \_How do I want them to feel?

#### **4. Build in purposeful pitstops to keep your physical, cognitive, and emotional tanks full**

This is 3D Recovery, and when you are on the go, you can visualize it like a true pitstop in a Formula 1 race. Since you will be at home, you'll have some latitude that you may not have had in your typical work/school setting. Using a quick bout of movement (20 breathing squats, a 5-minute walk, skipping up and down the street, etc.) can be a great way to reset your brain and clear some of your emotional fatigue. Taking a quick 5-minute breathing (box breathing or equal breathing is perfect) or meditation break is a fantastic way to reboot your brain, rebalance your autonomic nervous system, and refocus your intentions for what is coming next. Take a virtual coffee/tea break with your colleagues, where you jump on a virtual call (video preferred) and you enjoy a cup of coffee or tea while you just chat and laugh (great for keeping social distance). Take a quick ten minutes and build yourself a beautiful, tasty, and healthy salad and then eat in peace and quiet to help you to be present. These are just a few small examples, so be creative with your own ideas and then share them with your team and family.

#### **5. Learn, learn, learn so you can be a little better tomorrow**

Practicing the mindset skill of reflection combined with curiosity, openness, and vulnerability is a great way to grow on the go. These current times are full of new challenges and no one has been here before. Therefore, give yourself the freedom to not be perfect, but rather to constantly learn and grow. This creates a valuable purpose for this entire crisis and it will help you become a better leader, follower, partner, child, sibling, and parent during the toughest of times.

#### **End Your Day Fulfilled**

Working in a new way, under entirely untested and new conditions, with potentially endless demands can be draining. It can also be very fulfilling and inspiring, but only if you end your day properly. Just as you started your day with a walk outside, it is a great idea to end your day by turning off your computer and making a list of where to start tomorrow. Take a walk and reflect on what you did well, what you learned, and how you have been challenged today. Then, take the last part of your walk to apply similar intention-setting questions to prepare for your loved ones as you close out your day.

The Winston Churchill quote, "Never let a good crisis go to waste" truly applies here. We believe that this current situation can create some of the most innovative thinking we have seen in our lifetime. Simultaneously, it can help you personally catalyze some new habits that will give you the

performance resilience skills to Access Agency. These new habits will be applicable to the next challenges you will face.

And one final thought:

## **Pandemic**

What if you thought of it  
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—  
the most sacred of times?  
Cease from travel.  
Cease from buying and selling.  
Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world  
different than it is.  
Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.  
Center down.

And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)  
Know that our lives  
are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has come clear.)  
Do not reach out your hands.  
Reach out your heart.  
Reach out your words.  
Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—  
for better or for worse,  
in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.

—Lynn Ungar 3/11/20

