

Ep #29: How to Support Your Mental Health Under Quarantine



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Nicole Symcox

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The worst thing you can do for your body right now is to be frozen on the couch scrolling social media, okay. It sends a trapped message to your body and it's a recipe to feel like shit. So, make sure you are incorporating movement into your daily routine based on your physical ability. This helps your body to feel healthy, it helps your mind to feel healthy, and it helps you to just feel better overall.

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Here's your host, educator, coach and licensed psychotherapist, Nicole Symcox...

Hello, my friends. Welcome to episode 29. So, at this point, we have to talk about the Coronavirus. I know for me, I'm being deeply impacted by it. As most of you know, I am located in California. And at the time that I'm recording this today, we were just issued a statewide shelter-in-place order.

And this is a pretty strict mandate, which means we can't leave our houses for, basically, medical, to go to the grocery store, or to take a walk outside. So, you know, it's a pretty big deal. There is something like 40 million people in California and we have just basically been quarantined to our homes indefinitely. So, there is no end date on this order.

So, I thought we have to talk about this at this point because it just creates an immense amount of fear and anxiety and uncertainty, especially because we don't really know when this is going to end. And so, we need to do what we can to support our mental health in this time and settle into what's going to be kind of a new normal for a little while.

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So, in this episode, I want to give you some tips and tools on how to weather through this storm. So, I know not everyone is quarantined, but I do know that self-quarantine is something that is highly promoted right now. So, even if you're not in my boat where we're being forced to be quarantined, you know, it's not a choice any longer for us, there's still the best practices of self-quarantining. So, I think this episode will be helpful for anyone trying to manage their mental health right now in light of the Coronavirus.

Alright, so, let's dive into this. This is such a scary time. And so, we need to manage our anxiety and our stress levels more than ever. So, we need to start doing what we can to take our brains out of the unknown, all the fears and anxieties, because there's so much that's unknown right now, and taking back our power and control and doing what we can by creating some healthy knows. So, we want to do this so we can move through this time of crisis in healthy ways.

So, number one, let's just start here. If you have a therapist, ask if they do online sessions. During this time of quarantine, for insurance purposes, it's called telehealth. And so, I know here in California, therapists are either already online because here in the Bay Area, we actually got a shelter-in-place order four days ago at the time I'm recording this. And here we are four days later and now it's statewide.

So, I know many California therapists will be transitioning online. And so, I'm sure that will be true for other states. And so, make sure, like, if you have a therapist or if you want to start therapy, that you ask them if they offer telehealth and if you can meet them online and do virtual appointments if you're not allowed to go to their offices.

So, in other words, don't skip out on managing your mental health because you're quarantined and you can't leave your home. Give online sessions a try and stay on top of managing your mind and emotions. Fear, at this point, is just as contagious as this virus at this point.

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We have mirror neurons, and this is wired into our survival mechanisms as infants. So, mirror neurons allow us to feel part of a collective. So, we mirror back the emotions of others. It's what gives us the ability to even empathize with another person's situation.

And so, this can be a very good thing. But when mass hysteria is taking place, which is what I've been witnessing over the last four days, you know, it breeds fear and anxiety and it becomes contagious. So, we need to manage this, and that will not happen automatically.

What will happen automatically is you will freak the fuck out. That's human nature. That is how we're wired in times of crisis; we get afraid. We have to intervene with healthy strategies and we have to take care of ourselves in order to stay ahead of this.

So, what am I saying? Therapy is important and it's probably essential right now because everybody's in crisis mode, okay. So, don't skip out on your mental health. Check in, in your local state of residence, what therapists are offering online services.

Alright, number two is spending 20 minutes a day in the sun, sitting, walking, doesn't matter. Just because you're quarantined at home, doesn't mean you can't sit outside for 20 minutes and take in some vitamin D3.

Right now, in California, our mandate actually allows us to take walks as long as we're staying six feet apart. So, we are actually allowed to walk the dog or walk for exercise, so they are allowing for that as long as we are staying six feet apart.

So, this is a great opportunity to make sure that you get some fresh air, that you get out in the sun, and just allow 20 minutes a day to get some of that vitamin D3. Vitamin D3 from the sun really supports serotonin production and it's a neurotransmitter that regulates anxiety and depression. This guy

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is important. This neurotransmitter is important. So, we want to give it its best shot at supporting you in the best way possible.

So, being out in the sun is one way to do that. But I know in some areas, it's rainy, it's overcast, so there is no sun. And so, people actually with seasonal affective disorder, they use lamps. And they're specific lamps that stimulate vitamin D3 production because they are imitating the sun. So, you can use those for 15 to 20 minutes a day if you're not able to get out in the sun. And so those are something you can buy online.

But it's something that people use to help them with seasonal affective disorder, which is a disorder where, when the sun goes out, they get depressed. And so, they need to do light therapy, essentially, to keep themselves feeling good.

Number three, take care of your body. Emotions start in the body. If you've been listening to me for a while now, you know this. When emotions go unprocessed and they're not dealt with, they can wreak havoc on your body. We hold the stories of our lives in our bodies.

So, ignoring it or disregarding it won't work. We have to honor what's there and we have to learn how to support ourselves in healthy ways. Further, it's so important for us right now because we are fighting a pandemic. We need to keep our immune systems up. And in of the things that you can do to support your immune system is to support your stress levels, okay.

Believe it or not, high stress levels actually wreak havoc on your immune system. It sends a signal that something is wrong and your immune system feels like it needs to start fighting and dealing with all the inflammation that tends to get created with stress.

So, you need to manage your mind because in the end that's what helps manage your body and we want to keep your body in the healthiest place it

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can be, especially in times like this. Because your body only has so many internal resources, so let's not burn it out with stress, anxiety, and fear.

And that's the temptation right now. There is a lot to be afraid of, and so we have to offer ourselves support, calm, and peace when we can get it. And so, exercise is critical right now, especially with those of us who are home 24/7 right now, that we're quarantined and we're not really leaving our houses.

So, just keep in mind, just because you're quarantined, doesn't mean you don't have choices or options. There are plenty of on-demand exercise programs. There's plenty of old-fashioned exercise videos. If you have equipment at your home use it. Use the weights, use the treadmill, use the Peloton bike. Use it.

The worst thing you can do for your body right now is to be frozen on the couch scrolling social media. It sends a trapped message to your body and it's a recipe to feel like shit. So, make sure you are incorporating movement into your daily routine based on your physical ability. This helps your body to feel healthy. It helps your mind to feel healthy. And it helps you to just feel better overall.

Number four, continue to eat foods that make your body feel good. So, when you're stuck at home and you're feeling stressed and anxious, it is so tempting to stress eat. But too much stress eating is going to lead you to feeling like shit. We all know this.

So, let's stay ahead of this because, again, I don't know when this is going to change. So, we need to start creating a healthy new normal. And so, at the time I'm recording this, our food supply is actually okay. healthy foods are available.

Power companies haven't said they're cutting anyone's power, at least today. I know things change, but on the day I'm recording this, these are

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the facts that are true. If anything, what I've heard is that power companies want to keep your power on because they know you're going to be at home.

So, think about how can you cook healthy means at home, or how can you eat in healthy ways? So, many restaurants, at least here in California, are still open, but they're not functioning the way that they were before. They're only allowed to function in order to provide delivery services at this point.

So, even if you don't cook, you can still get whatever healthy foods you want from whatever restaurants are allowed to stay open in this time of shelter-in-place. So, the thing is that the grocery stores, seeing empty shelves just led to a huge amount of panic.

And so, what we need to realize in that is that, at this point in time, there's no issue with the food supply. What happened is that people were panic buying. And so, when people bought all the food off the shelves, it created other panic, and so people ran out.

Stores started to run out of things because people were buying so much in bulk. And so, if we all go back to buying normal quantities at the grocery stores, it's likely to even out again. And so, all of this feeds panic. And so, when we start to just shop normally, you're sending a message to your brain that things are okay.

And so, we want to support ourselves the best we can. We want to be on healthy eating regimens. And when I say healthy, I mean what feels good to your body, eating the foods that nourish you.

This isn't about weight or anything like that. This is about nourishing your body and giving it the fuel it needs to feel its best. Being quarantined is not a reason to just eat endless Cheetos, okay. You can have some Cheetos if those don't affect you in a bad way and they make you feel fine. Do you kind of get my point? Just continue to nourish your body in healthy ways.

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Number five, safety and security is essential and there are so many unknowns, so you need to make positive deposits in your nervous system at this time. And there is a simple way to create that; by implementing a predictable routine.

And I know that sounds overly simple, but it's really not. So, you want to start creating a routine for yourself that feels good and supportive to your wellbeing. So, a lot of people I'm talking to, because we had this mandate come through four days ago, are already going stir-crazy and they don't know what to do with themselves.

And I totally get it. We've never been in this place before where we're being quarantined for long periods of time in our home. And so, we need to create a routine for ourselves to help build up safety and security. We need to create some predictables.

We need to control the things that we can control in healthy ways because there's just too many unpredictables right now. So, this is how you start taking back some of your control and support yourself in lowering your anxiety levels.

So, schedule in exercise. Schedule in regular mealtimes. Schedule in family bonding. Schedule in work hours. Schedule connecting with friends and family online. Keeping a routine and adding things that feel normal and good and supportive to you will help you feel more grounded in the midst of all of this chaos.

Number six, stay connected to other humans. We're quarantined and we're not allowed to see people outside our homes, but I would strongly encourage you to make and keep connections with people online or on the phone.

I totally get, it's not the same as being in person. But it is still very helpful to keep connection going. Schedule in virtual coffee dates. Schedule in virtual

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lunch dates with people. Just because you're home, it doesn't mean you have to be emotionally isolated. We're physically isolating ourselves to stop the spread of a virus. But we do not need to emotionally isolate.

It is more important than ever to emotionally connect with other people. Isolating emotionally is a recipe for a mental health disaster. Isolation and fear are not a good combo. So, stay connected with healthy people, with supportive people, with your safe people. Don't block yourself off from people emotionally. This is incredibly important.

Number seven, be a good human, okay. everybody is scared to death right now. Everybody is fearful. People are losing their jobs. People are losing their sense of security. People are afraid for their health. People are afraid for the health of their loved ones. Everyone is stressed out to the max, okay.

Now is not the time to turn against each other. We're all in this together, for the first time, we are collectively, worldwide experiencing the same trauma at the same time. And we're all feeling it economically, socially, physically, okay. So, we need to unite and support each other. Take time to encourage one another, okay. let's spread some love, support, and empathy.

Our healthcare workers are working so hard right now. Let's go out of our way to appreciate them. Let's go out of our way to appreciate other people. There is so much negative messaging. Be a contributor to changing the narrative.

Let's validate each other's fears. Let's support each other in feeling better, you know. Let's start building each other up and let's try to make that contagious. Let's try to change the narrative on this thing.

I'm not saying let's forget we're in a global pandemic right now. What I am saying is we acknowledge that things are insane right now and we're all scared. And let's just try to be a good human with each other. Let's try to

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send positive text messages that build people up, that acknowledge their fears. Listen with empathy. Be supportive. Let's see if we can change the narrative.

Lastly, several of you have reached out to me and wanting to know what type of online services I am making available. So, just like you, I was given this news at the very last minute. And so, I had to transform my entire therapy practice online, you know, in a matter of days.

And so, I am working around the clock right now to do the same thing for you with coaching. And so, if you have wanted to work with me online but haven't been able to, this is going to be a great opportunity for you.

So, what I'm doing is I'm building an online community so that you do not have to feel isolated and that you can get mental health support, you can learn tips and tools on how to manage stress and anxiety during this time. And so, it should be a really, really cool thing.

I'm excited about it. I'm working really, really hard on it. So, thank you for your grace and patience as I get this up and going. But if you are interested and want more information about it when it launches, definitely go to my website at nicolesymcox.com/join. And what that will do is it will put you on my waiting list, so the second I am ready to launch this online community, you will be notified of the details, and then you get to decide if you want to join.

So, it's still up to you, the invitation is there. But you get to choose. Alright, so it's all good either way. But I wanted to let you know, I am thinking about you. I want to do what I can to support everyone in this situation the best that I can, so I'm creating some really cool things for you. I'm working really hard on them. So, check out my website, nicolesymcox.com/join.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Mental Health Remix. If you like what you've heard and want to learn more, go to nicolesymcox.com.

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