Self-Care During a Pandemic

It's a difficult time. Many people are saying that their brains are working hard, but not accomplishing as much as they're used to because of the pandemic:

- Additional work & responsiblities
- Major concerns over loved ones

- Working & schooling at home
- Worrying about older parents

We have new technologies to learn. We have a business to run which is changing. We have work and home colliding inside the walls of our home. What can we do during this time to help ourselves (*and many of these ideas you could share with clients*).

WAYS TO PRACTICE SELF-CARE

- Start a self-care "plan" or list so you have it ready and know what works for you. Keep it somewhere handy; take a phone picture; put it on your refrigerator, or in your morning journal.
- Keep a list of ideas of things you enjoy for when you have down time.
- If one of you in a couple is less anxious about the news, let that person be your "news funnel." Keep to headlines, and get your summary each day.
- Social Media: Limit your time. Unfollow who or what makes you anxious. Or take a short retreat from social media. Promote positivity yourself.
- A 20-minute nap will refresh you more effectively than a longer nap.
- Get outdoors: take a hike
- Home exercise: use the stairs or treadmill; take a 6 foot-apart walk with a neighbor; anything to get your heart rate up!

- Try something new. Ask a friend to show you (virtually) how to do something for the first time or use YouTube to educate yourself.
- Distractions – on purpose – can be useful to feel safe. Take in the online concerts by musicians from home, the virtual museum tours, the photography class, learn to knit, color mandalas, sew. Do something to give your feelings a break. Limit the time spent, so you feel good about doing this, not guilty afterwards. (Use a timer.)
- Practice gratitude. Choose a special journal. Positive thinking is a habit.
- It feels good to start your day with a shower and business dress. Wear a different pair of earrings each day.
- Do something for YOU first thing.

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- Keep to as many of your regular (stabilizing) routines as possible. At least go to bed and get up in the morning around the same time. This gives your body a sense of normalcy and of what time it is.

- Create virtual tea/coffee breaks with co-workers, friends, or family. If you need to, put these into your calendars.

- Organizing is often cathartic. Choose something small that feels doable.

- Some days, you may find yourself saying "I'm just done! I can't do anymore." Honor that and leave your desk. Expect less of yourself during this time. Every area of our lives has been disrupted somehow and we can't ignore that, thinking we can push through all those disruptions, uncertainties and change.

- Some therapists are working via phone or virtual. Or use some of the online sources until you have your own to talk to. But talk about your feelings.

- Movement/exercise: You may not be allowed to leave your apartment or home, but you CAN get lots of steps in and short walks inside. Decide whether you need/want an exercise buddy, who is with you or virtually with you.

- For your work, you may need to limit the number of clients if you are in a role where you need to call on your own empathy and support. Otherwise you may take on too much troubling energy.

- Self-care ideas: do art, listen to music and sing, write in a journal, and don't forget to dance!

- With routines, here's one example which makes keeping them easier: Week 1 Keep morning routine (still getting up same time, water, breakfast, etc.). Week 2 add stretching. Week 3 (for example): update website. Week 4: create a self-care plan.

- Organize your days differently: Work for 2 hours, eat, play or exercise for 2 hours. Create a daily balance between "work," fun, housework, etc.

- Start your day with something that makes you get out of bed: Example - Start the day with something scheduled like a zoom meeting or something with structure.

- Use a meditation app (Insight Timer) to start your day...or use it in short spurts throughout the day.

- Call one person who is shut in and alone. Reaching out to others is self-care.