



3 Well-being Tips to Stay Centered in a Crisis

Skills and Professional Development



There is no doubt that COVID-19 has shaken our foundations. In just over a month, I've gone from a solid routine of working in the office at my in-house role, to working from home, taking leave without pay, and watching 90 percent of my colleagues being stood down (and possibly being stood down

myself).

I'm not unique in this regard — I look around and see anxiety and fear. Now is a great time to pause, take a breath, and set ourselves up for well-being success.

1. Enjoy the opportunity to invent a new routine

Our brains love routines because our ability to make good decisions is a finite resource. The more (good) routine you have in your day, the more juice you'll have when it's needed most and you'll stave off decision-making fatigue.

- Keep appropriate boundaries between work and non-work time. It can be easy to be “on” all the time if you're isolated at home and no longer accessing the separation of the office and home life. Make a point of setting up and packing away your work area each day.
- No longer commuting? Spend that time exercising or as quality time with your family.
- If you have trouble concentrating out of the office environment, try using the Pomodoro technique (or similar) and noise-cancelling headphones to keep you focused for a set period.

Include time for yourself, connecting with others, downtime, and some fun in your new routine. Be creative and enjoy it while it lasts!

2. Reduce anxiety and stagnation with brain *and* body exercise

Anxiety in times like this are expected, but don't let it consume you. Fear can manifest as worrying about your career, finances, clients; being attached to your phone and not “disconnecting”; or procrastinating. These behaviors might seem useful, but any time your attention is anywhere but the present moment is a missed opportunity.

Anxiety can also manifest physically as butterflies in the stomach, digestive issues, tension, and headaches. Exercising your body with physical movement, and exercising your mind with meditation, are effective ways of helping you find calm and presence.

Physical exercise releases chemicals that are great for [elevating your mood](#), improving your circulation so you don't feel stagnant, and can help improve the quality of your sleep. Here are some easy workouts to try at home:

- On the phone and don't need to filenote? Walk while you talk to get your steps up.
- Step away from the desk at least once an hour. Make a coffee or, if you're not in the office, why not do some burpees or sun salutes?
- Go for a walk outside or, if that's not possible, there's an explosion of [online exercise options](#) so we're spoiled for choice — get [150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise](#), or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity exercise each week.

Exercising your mind with meditation is a great way to train your brain out of unhelpful thinking patterns. Meditation is simply the practice of concentrating on an object of choice.

The benefit of practicing concentration is that you'll notice when your thought patterns are drifting into unhelpful territory. Once you identify them, you can decide to turn your attention to the present moment and the task at hand, like with these mindfulness techniques:

-
- Take a “mindful moment” when you get a glass of water or cup of coffee. Pay attention to each small movement that makes up the action and dial down the distractions.
 - When you’re having a conversation with someone, give them your full attention. Don’t mindlessly check your emails at the same time.
 - Try different meditation styles to see what works for you. For example, [Merry Therapy](#) offers a free pdf and a recorded meditation to guide you to inner peace.

3. We are all in this together

Paradoxically, social distancing may also be increasing our awareness of our sense of community and its importance to our well-being. It’s showing us that we are always connected, and that no one person is experiencing suffering on their own.

It’s also generating compassion and generosity — two words that we don’t use to describe the legal profession normally. Practicing compassion for others increases our own sense of well-being, creating a positive feedback loop. Start with these acts of kindness:

- Go out of your way to call a colleague, friend, or family member and have a ‘virtual’ cup of tea check-in with them. Don’t just talk shop — share a bit of your home life. (Pets and babies highly rated!)
- If your social distancing allows it, visit your local café or order delivery to support local businesses. Give them a shout-out on social media for their hard work.
- And don’t forget, compassion for yourself is just as important.

Be mindful, be creative, and appreciate this unique opportunity we have to reset!

For more advice on coping during the quarantine, visit [ACC’s COVID-19 Resource Center](#).

[Merridy Woodroffe](#)



In-House Lawyer

Virgin Australia Group

She runs a private Occupational Wellbeing Advisory and Yoga Therapy practice supporting lawyers and other professionals to regain calm and joy. She has been exploring self-awareness and the equilibrium of life for 20 years through the practices of meditation, movement, and breathing. www.merrytherapy.com