
Tips on making the best of COVID-19 lockdown

By Femi Ajidahun

Now, more than ever, is the time to borrow lessons from the history books. History show that wars and pandemics come to an end, regardless of how difficult the times may be. Tough times will always blow over; however, you need certain skills and information to survive and thrive during these trying times. The elderly, the vulnerable, the unemployed, job seekers, the immunocompromised, the retired and just about everyone else can benefit from some tips on navigating this phase.

Although this phase of the lockdown and social distancing is transient, it is nonetheless a tough time. Dwell on the good news - it shall pass. Job seekers and unemployed persons find this period difficult; in addition to not having a job/income, they do not have Employment Insurance, benefits or part-time jobs to rely on. The vulnerable group can easily become disoriented, disappointed as they become more dependent on family members, friends and charity. This is also a particularly trying time for young people accustomed to numerous activities. When self preservation instincts kick in for most financially stable people, they become more selfish and less hospitable – stocking up on personal items without caring about others – fighting over toilet papers, etc. Do not lose your humanity in all of this. This too shall pass.

FINANCIAL HEALTH - ADJUSTMENTS

If you have been receiving some stipends in the past, now is the time to adjust and spend on only essentials. Cut off whatever is not required for life and health. Only basic needs - food (including medications). You do not need new clothing unless it is winter in your part of the world and you do not have a piece of warm clothing. If the latter is the case, consider asking friends and family members for extra/spare warm clothing. You should speak to your landlord if you expect any difficulty in paying your next rent. Some landlords ([Quebec](#), [Ontario](#)) have been advised not to enforce evictions this period, however, do not assume, always reach out to your landlord for confirmation. Some telephone companies have [provided guidelines that ensure that services will not be suspended or disconnected for any customers experiencing financial difficulties over the next 90 days](#). You need to let all your creditors know your unique situation and need for extra time in making payments. Most financial institutions can adjust your payment schedule if you ask ahead of time. Put off major purchases. Do not make reckless financial decisions that can worsen your credit ratings during this period.

Consider selling those items in your home you have not used in almost a year. There are people with excess cash who are currently looking to pick up a bargain. Sell those fancy throw pillows, the old camera, that extra laptop, the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th wristwatches. Basically, get rid of those extra items you do not genuinely need.

If you have made some impulse purchases recently, consider returning them and ask for full refunds if that is still possible. For stores that are closed during this period, consider keeping the tags on for return at a later date. You can find more information on the store's website or social media.

MENTAL HEALTH

Focus. Challenge yourself with exercises, puzzles, games and online assignments. Go to free online freelance assignments/projects, search out online job boards where you can contribute to projects freelance. Consider lots of remote jobs; apply for call centre jobs, remote tech support, remote writing jobs. This offers an opportunity to challenge yourself and stay mentally alert. If your community library is not closed yet, go borrow some books. Some Provincial Governments are calling retired nurses, non-clinical doctors, and other medical professionals that can supplement/relieve the current emergency workers. If you enjoy challenges, you can volunteer at the nearest government community centres since most of them are figuring this lockdown out as they go, it can be an awesome experience.

Ramp up online classes and certifications. With lots of free online courses, [Coursera](#), [Udemy](#), [YouTube](#) etc. – lots of content that do not go into lockdown/isolation, you can learn new tricks and maybe graduate with a 14-day certification in bartending. You can learn how to make a new dish, watch some food network channels. I personally just discovered tipsy bartender and I am planning to make myself a gallon of hunch punch.

It is okay to need help. If you need to talk to someone, please take advantage of the free online counselling sessions available around you. Canada's Capital University – Carleton University has various free [Mental Health Crisis Hotlines](#), so do most Universities, city authorities and community centres. Utilize the various resources available for people with mental health issues – it's okay to need help.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Even during the lock down, determine to be active. When you exercise, your body releases chemicals called endorphins. These endorphins interact with the receptors in your brain that reduce your perception of pain. Improved self-esteem is also a key psychological benefit of regular physical activity.

Be active. Find creative ways to stay alert and active even indoors. There are lots of physical activities that can still be done in the confines of the home/indoors – take the stairs more often but watch the stair rails. This is a good time to start your spring cleaning. If you have unlimited internet, there are lots of free cardio and workout channels, or simply follow [Patience J - Youtube](#) and watch her [Afro in heels Instagram](#). You will love it and if you dance and sing along, you will be fit and may even lose some pounds.

Ensure you continuously follow all public health guidelines to continue to protect yourself and keep the social distance to reduce the spread of the disease in the community.

SOCIAL HEALTH

Taking a cue from families and communities that have been in isolation, from Wuhan, to South Korea, to Lombardy, and around the world, we know the huge toll isolation and movement restrictions have on mental health and how easy it is to slip into depression. Stay in touch with friends and family, check in with each other and tend to their emotional wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Swallow your pride and shelf any animosity you have towards anyone. Call your family, friends, neighbours, your Ex, and even your enemies. You never know which life a phone call will save. [See more on how to fight loneliness from social isolation](#)

SPIRITUAL HEALTH

If you are spiritual, now is the time to live your faith. If you have not been praying, this is the time to pray. Draw inspiration and motivation from God. Tapping into the spiritual is not about panicking, it is about drawing on inner strength and help in time of need. Meditate. Practice some yoga.

SMILE - TURN THIS INTO A VACATION

Who says you can't take a vacation in isolation? If you have not had time to yourself this year, this is a good time to rejuvenate. The year 2020 has been so busy and overwhelming already, we all deserve a break. If you are in self-isolation, you can take this time to review career, family goals and your plans for 2020 – new year resolution if you still make one...see the cup as half full – recover your energy, get good sleep, but do not over sleep.

IN CONCLUSION

You can then take advantage of the reduced government interest rates and buy a new house, new truck or start a new business. It's not all grim and gloom afterall.