

COVID-19: A Law Student's Guide to Self Care & Healthy Remote Work Habits

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Note: *Much of the following guidance centers folks practicing social distancing or who are self-quarantining (due to being immunocompromised or because they are symptomatic). However, this advice is equally relevant for those able to go outside and places of public accommodations (e.g. school or community library, stores, etc.).*

Disclaimer: *The following is not, and should not be used as, a substitution for psychiatric or medical care. If you are under the care of a psychiatrist, therapist, or other medical professional, please reach out if you're not feeling well. Please call your school's health center if you need psychiatric help: BU students can call: 617-353-3569. Students at other MA schools can reach out to Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers - MA. They are conducting remote counseling sessions: <https://www.lclma.org/schedule/>. If you are outside of MA, please contact your local Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP): https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/resources/lap_programs_by_state/*

BASELINE RULES

Rule 1: No feeling silly or shameful for taking extra precautions to keep your physical and mental health intact— we're all doing the best we can

Rule 2: If you're feeling overwhelmed by social isolation, reach out to a friend or the call/text the crisis line (Text HOME to 741741; 1-800-273-TALK). The text and hotline are for emotional distress **and** suicidal thoughts or self harm concerns. The effect of social isolation can creep up on you, and unless you regularly work from home, it's not something our brains are used to. It's okay to feel lonely, and there are ways to mitigate that and to adjust healthily to our new circumstances.

Rule 3: This resource is a guide to support your wellness intentions. Don't be hard on yourself if you set an intention to incorporate these practices into your home-work-routine and fall short! Even if you just do one thing on this list that you wouldn't have ordinarily done, that is one thing you did to support yourself and you should be proud of that effort! Tomorrow is always a new day to try again with any of the following practices.

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CULTIVATING MOTIVATION

- **Get dressed.** Pajamas are fantastic. If you're having a fine time getting work done and getting your brain on board for work mode in PJs, more power to you! However, if you find that you aren't quite in the mood to get work done due to your change of scenery, dressing as if you're going to school may help.
- **Keeping with routine.** What do you normally do in the morning, afternoon & evening? Try to write it down and stick with it. It'll help break up the day, preventing at home working from becoming one large block of time.
- **Set a daily schedule.** This can take a few forms & can incorporate both life and school work tasks
 - Agenda style where you set targets to hit by certain hours of the day.
 - Checklist style which allows more flexibility with targets (e.g. complete Con Law reading by Thursday).
 - Scheduling working blocks and resting blocks
 - Resources: <https://blog.mindvalley.com/daily-routine/>;
<https://www.wikihow.com/Have-a-Daily-Routine> (for those of us who are appreciate visual cues)

WORKING THROUGH AT HOME FOCUS ISSUES

- **Pomodoro method.** If you have trouble focusing at home, try using a Pomodoro app timer. There are some that "game-ify" the practice that are very low cost
 - Forest (available on the app store)
 - Others
 - <https://medium.com/@kalie.allebach/best-productivity-app-pomodoro-focus-habit-tracker-to-do-list-goal-setting-note-taking-ios-mac-4cd8f09daf7d>
 - If you are trying to limit screen time, a kitchen timer works well for the pomodoro method (traditionally 25 minutes working, 5 minutes break).
 - <https://lifehacker.com/productivity-101-a-primer-to-the-pomodoro-technique-1598992730>
- **Ear plugs.** Many of us are working from home with roommates. This can be a hard adjustment if you're used to working silently in the library. Get a bunch of disposable or

reusable ear plugs. This might allow you to work in the same room as folks which can lessen the feeling of social isolation.

- Disposable, these are a relatively affordable option:
 - https://www.amazon.com/Macks-Ultra-Soft-Foam-Earplugs/dp/B0051U7W32?ref=fscpl_dp_7
- Reusable
 - https://www.amazon.com/High-Fidelity-Earplugs-Sleeping-Motorcycles/dp/B07V9CYH4B/ref=sr_1_4?crid=2HX6Y7637BMUX&dchild=1&keywords=reusable+ear+plugs+for+sleeping+noise+cancelling&qid=1584215392&s=hpc&sprefix=reusable+ear%2Chpc%2C151&sr=1-4
- **Website blockers.** If you find using certain websites irresistible while trying to remotely attend class etc., consider downloading a website blocker. You can either whitelist websites (meaning your browser will only let you connect to the websites listed) or blacklist websites (meaning your browser will let you connect to all websites except for the ones you've banned).
 - Self control: The aptly named resource is a simple one to learn and use
 - <https://selfcontrolapp.com/>
 - Other resources: <https://zapier.com/blog/stay-focused-avoid-distractions/>

TAKING CARE OF YOUR BODY & MIND

If exercise is part of your daily or weekly routine, the closure of school fitness facilities can pose an enormous challenge. Thankfully there are a few ways to bring some of that exercising goodness into your home. Let's supercharge those endorphins!

Be safe with new programs, when in doubt clear exercise programs with your physician

- **Yoga.** If yoga is your thing but you can't or don't want to go to a studio, here are some at home resources
 - **Downdog.** Downdog is a yoga app that is accessible through your phone or web browser & it is highly customizable. The app also has **HIIT & Barre** classes! The best news is that it is free until April 1st for everyone & until July 1st for students: <https://www.downdogapp.com/web>
 - **Video streaming:** Lots of free videos for all levels at all times: <https://www.doyogawithme.com/>
 - **Live class streaming (donation based):** <https://www.jpcentreyoga.com/>
 - **Bonus social points!** You can share your screen on video platforms like Zoom. Consider hosting a remote yoga session with friends. Part of what makes yoga

compelling for some is sharing the experience with others. Although not a perfect solution, this is a good way to cultivate some of that benefit.

- **Home exercise classes.** As mentioned above, Downdog has some great exercise features. Here are some other free or low cost apps that can help you exercise at home. If you'd rather stay away from screens for this, printable workout guidance is below as well.
 - For small spaces.
<https://www.womenshealthmag.com/fitness/g19990484/tiny-apartment-exercises/>
 - Circuit.
<https://www.womenshealthmag.com/fitness/a20703092/total-body-traveling/>
 - Looking for a challenge?
<https://www.fitnessblender.com/articles/100-rep-home-bodyweight-workout-home-boot-camp-workouts>

- **Meditation apps.** Meditation apps are truly helpful when you're feeling overwhelmed or preparing for large projects! For example, if you're feeling anxious about starting a large writing assignment, try doing a quick meditation first.
 - BU Students have a free **headspace** subscription:
<https://www.bu.edu/provost/wellbeingproject/wellbeing-project-resources/>
 - Other schools may also have free subscription services, but if not, Headspace is offering students a year long subscription for \$9.99:
<https://www.headspace.com/studentplan>
 - There are also several free resources:
<https://www.mindful.org/free-mindfulness-apps-worthy-of-your-attention/>
 - If you're more into breathing exercises, try this app:
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.apps.paced.breathing&hl=en_US

- **Opening a window.** It seems simple, but feeling fresh air, listening to birds chirping, and hearing people converse as they walk down the street can calm overwhelm. It's not the same as being outside, but is good in a pinch if you're feeling claustrophobic. Of course if you're comfortable & able to go outside, walking around the block is a great option too.

- **Keep hydrated.** Sometimes just having a glass of cold water can center you and put you in a better mood. When we shift around our schedules and workstations our water intake can decrease. A good tip is to keep a reusable water bottle on your workstation (make sure to clean this thoroughly at the end of each day!).

- **Remote therapy.** If you're under the care of a therapist, inquire as to if they can conduct remote sessions via a video chat platform (e.g. Skype, FaceTime). Please note that depending on your insurance provider, your therapist may or may not be able to bill for remote sessions.
 - As mentioned in the disclaimer, LCL-MA is offering remote sessions. If you are not in MA, please use the linked directory to get in contact with your local Lawyer Assistance Program to see if they are offering remote counseling or can direct you to a professional in your community:
 - https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/resources/lap_programs_by_state/
 - **Therapy apps.**
 - If you have some financial resources, TalkSpace is an app that can pair you with a new therapist and offers remote sessions. Warning, this can be quite pricey (lowest plan currently advertised is \$65 a week billed as \$260 monthly)
 - <https://www.talkspace.com/>
- **Limit news intake.** It's very natural to want to know what's happening with the virus and that can lead to constant checking of news while we're trying to work or relax. Set a limit of the number of times you are allowed to check the news per day. If you're worried about not learning time-sensitive information, sign-up for your school's and town's alert service. That way you can self-soothe knowing that if something crucial is happening, you'll be notified.
- **30 second (or more) dance party.** Fans of Grey's Anatomy will get this reference! If you're feeling kind of stuck or stagnant, dancing around or just generally moving your body for the length of your favorite song can help you feel more grounded and boost your mood.

EYE HEALTH

- **20/20/20 Rule.** During this time you will be looking at screens way more often, try the 20/20/20 method to reduce eyestrain
 - <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321536#how-to-use-the-20-20-20-rule>
- **Augment screen lighting.** There are free apps that can change the lighting of your computer so that your eyes are less bombarded by blue light, especially at night.
 - F.lux: <https://justgetflux.com/>

- Research on bluelight:
<https://www.aoa.org/Documents/CRG/Blue%20Light%20and%20Eye%20Damage.pdf>

KEEPING A MEAL SCHEDULE / REMEMBERING TO EAT ENOUGH

- **Meal prep** When we're off our regular schedules it can be difficult for our bodies to remember that it's time to eat; if your appetite is waning, it's much easier to follow regular meal habits if you can just pop something in the microwave or oven
 - Need help meal prepping? Try these apps:
<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/best-meal-planning-apps>
 - Some more great tips about how to get started:
<https://dailyburn.com/life/health/meal-prep-ideas-healthy-meals/>
- **Set alarms** Set reminders for meal times to help parse out the day and keep yourself healthy & fed!

ONLINE SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

STUDYING

- Google hangouts or zoom "study groups"
 - If you're used to working with other people around, even if in silence, consider hosting or joining a video chat study group. It might seem silly, but even the option of chatting once and a while studying is helpful to ward off isolation symptoms.

BREAK TIME

If you're more of an in-person socializer you might have gaps of time to fill that weren't otherwise there. For some, it's tempting to fill this time with more work. That might not be a great idea as it can cause burnout. Below are some suggestions of how you might fill that time. Remember that it's easy to slip into an "extended break" if you're not careful-- for some of the activities below (especially video games) it's best to have a timer running so that you can stay on schedule.

- **Movie night!** Plan a remote movie night
 - Facebook: Facebook has a function where you can host a virtual movie watching party

- https://www.facebook.com/help/1681245065258554?helpref=about_content
 - Netflix Party: A Chrome extension that synchronizes Netflix playback with friends. You can host people in your “room” without netflix subscriptions.
 - <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/netflix-party/oocalimimngaihdkbihfgmpkcpnmlaoa?hl=en>
- **Virtual bar review or “happy hour”** Hang out with friends after you’re done with work for the day. This is a great thing to include in your daily/weekly schedule.
- **Video games.** Even if you’re not a “gamer” this could be of interest. World based video games can be grounding when you can’t venture outside yourself that much. Beware that for some this can be difficult to break away from which is where an accountability buddy or a schedule with alarms can come in handy. Examples: Zelda, Animal Crossing, Minecraft, Witcher ...
 - If you’re new to gaming, you can download a lot games on “Steam”
 - <https://store.steampowered.com/>
- **Non-screen options.**
 - Crochet/Knitting
 - Coloring books
 - If you have a printer, here are some free PDFs: <https://www.favecrafts.com/Adult-Coloring-Pages/Adult-Coloring-Pages-PDF>
 - Cleaning your space (Not for everyone, but some folks find this calming)
 - Try out a new recipe
 - Call a friend or family member (It might be nice to schedule this in advance and have that person call at a set time you so you don’t forget and work past the call)
 - Naps

1L FINALS PREP

- **Collaborate on outlines.** This is an overwhelming time for everyone. Collaborating on outlines is a great way to stay connected to your peers and be a good community member.
- **Outline banks.** Have old outlines that you want to share? Consider creating an outline bank so that members of your section can access those resources. Many clubs and journals also have outline banks. Reach out to club presidents to see if you can have access.

- **More than one way to outline!** Writing a large text document not your thing? Try “charting” with LucidChart. This is a great tool to create flow-charts <https://www.lucidchart.com/pages/?noHomepageRedirect=true>
- **Remote office hours.** Don’t forget about office hours. Professors are likely hosting remote office hours for students. Write down questions as you read/study and save them for an office hours session. It might be helpful to create a google doc that you can share with friends so that if you can’t “attend” an office hours session, a friend can ask them on your behalf.

OTHER ANTI-ISOLATION TOOLS (COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, GAMES & MORE!)

- **Culture House Guide.** Ordinarily Culture house is an organization that creates community spaces IRL. But, due to the virus, they have closed their community spaces & have created an online community space instead!
 - **Here’s what they say:** “While we are closed, rather than filling a commercial vacancy, we’re hoping to fill some of the vacancies in your schedule where community gatherings used to be. We’ll be live-streaming events, supporting local organizations, and providing opportunities for people to connect. CultureCloud is a living prototype – check back regularly for more content and updates.”
 - **Some resources that are already live on the site:**
 - Online board games if you don’t have any at home
 - Links for video synching services so you can watch with friends
 - Tools/opportunities to support your community, including how you can support local businesses
 - Link: http://culturehouse.cc/cloud?fbclid=IwAR3rYOW_xuvm3I3Ujia0WAGS-RGXkelmS4tS7I792IPxjnhc_FBAN-hykv0