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**Opinion**

# Practical suggestions for the new normal of coronavirus

By Allison B. Spitzer  
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*Photo: Contributed Photo; Allison B. Spitzer*

Stuck at home? Everyone's reaction is different. Anxiety, depression, grief, fear and anger can become more pronounced the longer we all must observe the needed restrictions. Each demographic faces its own challenges.

College kids at home are bummed so they need emotional space. This developmental period is one of exploration, freedom, adult identity formation and reflection. College dorms provide what home cannot. Redefining your relationship under close quarters takes work and great communication. Let them know your non-negotiable expectations vis-a vis chores and family interaction. Ask about and work around their pet peeves about being home. Neither they nor you want unwelcome scrutiny.

For seniors and for singles, in particular, it's critical to find ways to connect.

Twenty- and 30-year-olds could schedule a recurring video game with a friend, a regular "virtual" dinner through Zoom, or simultaneously watch the same Netflix movie while FaceTiming.

For seniors and those who are not completely computer savvy, there is no choice now but to learn the basics. Get a family member to tutor you. Loneliness is literally deadly.

Families of school-aged children have a triple whammy. There are more meals to be cooked and more constraints while trying to work remotely. Teaching your child is tough, whether it's your skill set or not. How do you replace the happiness of playdates and after-school activities?

You cannot do it all. Talk honestly with your kids about your own feelings. Use humor. Distract by changing tack. Lighten up. Less housework, more fun. Find your and your kids' "bottom line" expectations and needs. Then negotiate and respect them.

Be a role model. What do your kids really know about your work, and about you as a professional? Let your kids teach you their games — and play with them.

We're not "stuck at home." We just have a new lifestyle. So does everyone else, so let's move on and do what's possible to make good moments, hours, days and lives. The core of a good outcome emotionally will depend on our ability to communicate openly, frequently and sensitively with our families, job communities, and friends.

Get dressed.

Make a clear start to the day. If you didn't spend 24/7 in sweats and pj's before, don't do it now. It just reinforces how odd life has become. It's not a work vacation or an endless weekend interrupted by conference calls, homework or other "intrusions."

Eat meals together, schedule both interaction (recreation) and solitude. Being together 24/7 can be misery. Being alone can be misery. Develop a way to connect and separate predictably through the day with and from others. Define and respect your emotional boundaries and of those around you in sharing tight quarters and difficult times.

Go outside if you are able. Every day. Twenty minutes of nature. Take some deep breaths. Our new quarantine routine includes both our work and home responsibilities, relaxation, reach-outs, respite and reflection. Change it up over the weekend.

If you are in a family unit, consider a weekly meeting to check-in to discuss how things are going for each of you. What opportunities haven't you made time for? A group Zoom chat with neighbors, distant relatives, religious or volunteer friends?

Schedule distractions which don't lean on your personally addictive triggers from computer games, to overeating, alcohol, or over-exercising. Check out the wild freebies online now — free tours of the national parks, international museums, yoga classes and much more.

In chaos, find calm. And joy.

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