

10 Tips for Brain Health while Social Distancing



We know the brain naturally seeks out stimulation and connection, so “sheltering in place” and “social distancing” may not feel good for many people. There are lots of activities that help keep your brain healthy normally – how might those translate now?

If you are feeling stuck or cooped up, here are some tips to keep your brain active and healthy during the COVID-19 quarantine.

- 1. Create a daily schedule:** the brain looks for patterns – having structure can help when other aspects of life feel uncertain
 - Wake up and go to bed at a similar time each day
 - Get ready for the day, maintain a meal and activity schedule (using calendars can help!)
- 2. Mindfulness or Meditation:** help calm a busy mind!
 - Live sessions!
 - [UCSD](#) or [UCLA](#) (excellent overviews and starter classes)
 - [East Bay Meditation Center](#)
 - [Spirit Rock Meditation](#) (Marin)
 - Books: Jon Kabat-Zin (e.g., *Wherever You Go, There You Are*; *Mindfulness for Beginners*; *Full Catastrophe Living*)
 - Applications: [InSight Timer](#) (free practices!), [HeadSpace](#), or [Calm](#)
- 3. Physical activation:** activity in the body relates to better activity in the brain!
 - [UCSF free streaming classes](#)
 - In-home stretching, yoga (e.g., [freeyogadownload.com](#)), or [zumba](#)
 - [Planet Fitness](#) is live-streaming streaming classes 4 p.m. PDT
 - Applications with free practices: [Wakeout](#), [Down Dog](#)

4. **Try a new hobby that inspires you or makes you curious:** learning something new promotes new brain connections!
 - [Free shows, classes and concerts during COVID-19!](#)
 - Gardening in the backyard, [art](#), [cooking/baking](#) or learn a new language (online programs or applications like [Duolingo](#), [Babbel](#), [Memrise](#), [Natakallam](#))
5. **Solo reading, virtual book clubs, writing:** reading and writing associate with better brain aging!
 - Most public libraries have ebooks available, journal your experiences, creative writing
 - [Now Read This](#) book club from PBS NewsHour and The New York Times
6. **Limit frequency of COVID-19-related (or other stressful) news and limit screen time:** create an environment that sets your brain up for success
7. **Maintain your sleep:** good sleep restores the brain to keep it healthy for the next day
 - Check out some quick [sleep hygiene](#) tips
 - Free App: [CBT-i Coach](#)
8. **Social connection:** meaningful social connection improves mood and supports brain aging!
 - Virtual chats (e.g., Zoom, FaceTime, Google Duo), social media (e.g., [NextDoor](#), [Facebook](#)), games (e.g., [Words with Friends](#), [Uno](#), [Monopoly](#), [JackBox](#)), watch a movie together, either with the people you are sheltering in place with or online together (e.g., [Netflix Party](#))
9. **Telemental health options:** supportive care is available
 - Check with your PCP for recommendations, [UCSF Psychiatry](#) resources, or other virtual venues (e.g., [TalkSpace](#) application)
10. **Maintain a balanced diet:** as always, what is good for the heart, is good for the brain!
 - [Diets anchored in vegetables and whole grains have been linked to lower dementia risk](#)
 - Check memory.ucsf.edu/covid for recommendations on grocery delivery
11. **(Bonus tip!) Volunteering:** great way to kick-start brain connections through new experiences!
 - Consider virtual COVID-19-related opportunities in [San Francisco](#) or [California](#)

Be mindful of your needs and limitations and take care of yourself!

Check out our [Family Caregiver Webinar Series](#)

For updated guidelines on COVID-19, go to coronavirus.ucsf.edu