

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

by B. Kay Sugg

It seems fitting that May is Mental Health Month since many of us are experiencing heightened levels of stress or anxiety related to the Covid-19 virus.

Worries about the possible loss of jobs, fear of not being able to make mortgage payments, and even how we will feed and take care of our families can make us feel stress and suffer from depression. Symptoms that these worries cause may manifest in different ways, such as inability to sleep, headaches, upset stomach, loss of appetite or overeating, irritability, fatigue, loss of motivation, and more.

Chronic stress causes the body to release excess cortisol and adrenaline which suppresses the immune system and leads to physical illness.

Here are some strategies for lessening your stress level and for improving your mental health.



Ramp Up Your Exercise.

Instead of sitting for long periods watching movies on Netflix, use some of the workout and fitness videos available there or on Amazon prime and YouTube. Not only does more exercise cause your body to release endorphins (feel-good hormones), but it may also help to prevent weight gain from all that snacking you do when binge-watching movies

Reconnect with Friends from School or College.

You might have lost contact with old friends over the years, but there are many ways to find them on the internet. Reminiscing and laughing about old times when you were more carefree can boost your mood and rekindle friendships.

Pay Attention to News Updates Only Once a Day.

Constant updates on the Coronavirus and state of the economy can increase your stress level significantly; watching news (on tv or the internet) tends to increase anxiety more than reading it. Limit your news to just once per day, and choose to read it instead of watch, if possible. Listen to calming music or read a book you have been too busy to read in the past.

Get Outside As Often As Possible.

You can maintain social distancing and still walk around your neighborhood or enjoy riding your bike. Seeing that nature is going on as usual with flowers blooming, trees budding out, and bees and birds going about their expected routines will refresh your mind and body.



MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH... CONTINUED!

Use Social Media.

Reach out to others on social media where you will find plenty of company as well as entertaining posts, humorous video clips and memes, and a chance to catch up with friends and family. In addition, social media provides an opportunity to exchange ideas and feelings about the current situation. Being social beings, it helps to talk—or type.

Play with Your Pets.

There are many studies which show that pets provide emotional support to those suffering from mental strain and anxiety. Pets have no expectations of us except to be with them, and they make us laugh—which releases endorphins (the feel-good hormones).

Get Comfort and Hope from Religious Beliefs.

Read materials you may have in your home and participate in virtual services. The National Day of Prayer (designated by President Reagan as the first Thursday of May each year) is on May 7, 2020. Although it is not a public holiday, it calls on “all people of different faiths in the United States to pray for the nation and its leaders.”

Strengthen Your Bond with Family Members.

Take the opportunity to deepen your connection with your family members. If you are sheltered-in-place, you have an opportunity to really spend some quality time with those you love, share on a deeper level, and to make new memories. In addition to playing games and/or exercising with your spouse or children, have sharing times where you tell them stories about things that happened when you were growing up: in your family, the world, or your community.



Carrot Chips

INGREDIENTS

- 2 large carrots (or 3 medium)
- 1/2 teaspoon olive oil (or melted coconut oil)
- 1/8 teaspoon sea salt

Are you and your family craving potato chips while you are confined to your home? Try carrot chips; they are delicious and crunchy and have just 79 calories.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Wash and peel the carrots. Using a mandolin slicer or a knife, tilt the carrot and thinly slice diagonally to make oval-shaped pieces – if they're too thick, they'll be soft instead of crunchy.
3. Place the carrot slices in a bowl and toss with olive oil and salt.
4. Lay the carrots in a single layer on a cookie sheet lined with a Silpat or parchment paper.
5. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the carrots are dry and crisp. Watch them carefully toward the end, as they can burn quickly. Enjoy.

Makes 1 serving (or 2 small)

Recipe by Jenny Sugar

source: <https://www.popsugar.com/fitness/Carrot-Chips-Recipe-34719564>

