

STAY SOCIALLY CONNECTED

20 THINGS TO KEEP YOU AND YOUR LOVED
ONES HAPPY WHILE SELF-ISOLATING AND BEYOND



BY RON SMITH

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STAY SAFE STAY WELL

There is not one person in Australia who has not been impacted by the Coronavirus COVID-19 safety measures that has brought everyone to a point where we can no longer engage in activities that made up our daily routines.

Our work, lifestyles, financial security and social circles have been completely turned upside down, as the Government, business, the community and our brave frontline medical staff fight to save precious lives daily in a battle that must be won.

Whether we are now working from home, studying, or supervising the children's home schooling, somehow the days just seem longer. So, what do we do now with all this time we have alone or with our families, unable to go out except for the four essentials – to go to work, if you can't work from home, medical care, exercise, and shopping for food and essentials. It is important to use this time to enjoy ourselves, be more productive and help others.

Following are 21 ways to keep you and your loved ones entertained whilst you try to get through this period. Make sure you do a kind deed a day, it will make you and someone else feel better.

Ron Smith (74 and isolated)



Click the logo above to learn more.
Download the COVIDSafe app and help save lives.

DEDICATION

'Stay Socially Connected' is dedicated to our brave and committed doctors, nurses, police, ambulance, and the many support staff that keep our hospitals and medical services running to protect the health of the community. As a community we also recognize the contribution of our political leaders, medical specialists and individuals involved in planning and delivering the COVID-19 public health safety program.

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ABN 69 067 524 921

PO Box 2412, Kew, Victoria 3101

1. MAKE A SCHEDULE

The first thing you should do is to make a schedule. You don't want to have spent this time doing nothing productive and then ending up regretting it when it's over. So, start off by dividing your day into parts and make a tentative schedule that should include both productive and lazy hours. Get a good sleep, and then indulge in activities that make you happy, keep you healthy and add spice to your life.

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, make sure you have activities listed for each day and include a couple of phone calls every day to family and friends.

An easy way to organise is to use your diary to record activities at a regular time, another way is to use a calendar on the computer.



2. RAISE AWARENESS

We hear every day on the news about people who seem to not know the rules or be deliberately ignoring them. So, while you're isolating play your part in raising awareness around you on why self-isolation is so important. Raise awareness about Coronavirus on social media, and to those around you about how the virus spreads, what its consequences are, and what precautions you can take to avoid it. Raising awareness is the first step in combating it.



3. WASH YOUR HANDS

Perhaps the most important part about this self-isolation is protecting yourself from contracting COVID-19. Wash your hands as often as you can and advise others around you to do so also. According to the guidelines, each wash should be using soap and hot water and last 20 seconds for it to be effective. Also keep a physical distance of 1.5 metres between you and anyone outside your isolation zone that you may encounter.



4. ORGANIZE YOUR SPACE

Cluttered messy spaces can make us feel overwhelmed. If you are working or studying at home, choose a spot and organise it like you would an office space. A clean and orderly space will increase your productivity levels.

Use the extra time at home to declutter those spaces that you've been meaning to for ages – wardrobes, drawers, kitchen cupboards, spare rooms – the list is endless. Why not turn a spare room into an office so you don't have to use the dining table!



The best strategy is to work out your plan with priorities and finish one room at a time. Work out what you don't need and donate suitable goods and clothing to the local charity shop. But wait until after the restrictions are lifted to donate them – many local charity shops are closed and are not receiving or sorting goods during the lockdown.

5. KEEP PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

Physical activity is not just about keeping fit – it also keeps your energy levels high. With gyms closed, you can go for a walk or a run in the neighbourhood if you practise social physical distancing. Working out at home is also an option and much easier these days. There are exercise programs on television, and you can follow fun exercise or dance routines on YouTube to keep yourself fit.

Make sure if you have a dog to get out for a Pat, Chat and a Walk a Day to help keep the doctor away. Research has shown walking is a healthy pursuit for all ages as well as assisting people who live on their own deal with the issue of loneliness by connecting with neighbours and other dog owners. The Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria has an online Facebook program '[A Pat, Chat and a Walk a Day](#)' which people can join and share their dog walking activities.



6. STAY SOCIALLY CONNECTED

It is important to stay connected with extended family and friends and social media is providing support during this period of isolation. If you find yourself overwhelmed by the amount of texts, emails and notifications, it could be a good time to reconnect with old friends, reply to unanswered texts and clear out your bulging inbox. Engaging with other people, in isolation elsewhere, can be refreshing.

Try an App like House Party and invite your family and friends to join in the conversation. Make sure older members of the family have access and can use the House Party App.



7. LOOK OUT FOR OTHERS

Perhaps helping people is not usually on your schedule, but this might be a good time to self-reflect and see if there's something more you can be doing. With the elderly most at risk with COVID-19, perhaps you can assist them with getting groceries, medicines, or other necessities they may need.

A simple smile or a 'good morning' to elderly neighbours on a daily walk is a good start, and a gentle enquiry if they need assistance in getting shopping is a possible way to increase awareness and safety of older residents.

A regular phone call to family and friends for a chat is one of the little things which can bring a lot of comfort to people especially if they live alone.



The phone call is one of those little things that count

8. TAKE A BREAK FROM THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU

It's not possible to spend every waking hour with our families or roommates, so now that we find ourselves in this situation, it can be hard to keep from being angry. Take some 'me-time' and do things that make you happy alone and suggest the same for the people around you. Creating a balance will prove to be a positive thing.



9. GET TIDYING

Does your 'clothes chair' have more clothes on it than usual these days? Do you have drawers that are hard to close? It's probably time to do some tidying around the house, if you normally don't have the time for it. Clean up the clutter, clear out storage spaces and enjoy the results. Clothes no longer worn can be donated to the local charity shops. Check with the Charity Shop via phone to make sure they are receiving donations.



BEFORE

AFTER

10. DO SOME REORGANIZING - DISCOVER NEW ROOMS

This is probably a good time make some changes around your home. Reorganizing spaces can keep you busy and give things a new look. Start by reorganizing your wardrobe, maybe your bedroom, and then move on to places like the kitchen, your living room, or even the garden! Changing the layout of a room can be fun and exciting. You'll be surprised by the amount of space you can create if you move things around a little bit.



Use your mobile phone or iPad to take before and after photos of your changes

11. INDULGE IN SOME PAMPERING

Does your normal day-to-day routine leave you with little to no time to look after yourself? Well then count this isolation as a blessing. This is probably the best time for you to relax with a long bath or enjoying reading that book you received as a present or watching movies on television.

Look through your bookshelves and take out some of your favourite books. You could be surprised how much you will enjoy those books sitting on the shelf in your own home. Take out three for a start to enjoy reading.



12. SORT OUT YOUR PAPERWORK

Not many of us have neatly packed folders that house our bills, receipts, certificates and tax files. This could be the best time to sort through them and organize them. Order some box files or a small filing cabinet online to neatly order all your paperwork. You'll thank yourself when the time comes that you need to find that insurance policy, birth certificate or file for the tax office!



13. CLEAN YOUR PHONE

We don't mean dunking your phone in a tub of water and scrubbing it to keep it from contracting COVID-19. We mean, clean your phone from all the unnecessary data it may be hoarding. Get rid of your junk emails, all those forwarded pictures and videos from WhatsApp, and those screenshots from conversations you sent to your friends long ago.



14. VIDEO CALL YOUR FRIENDS

We know we can't meet our friends while in self-isolation, but we don't have to forget their faces while doing so. FaceTime someone you miss or send a message to set up a group conversation with Zoom.



15. TAKE UP A NEW HOBBY

It's unfortunate that our regular routines don't leave us with much room to explore our personalities. Perhaps this is the perfect time to start doing something we always wanted to try. Be it painting, knitting, crochet, jewellery making, writing; there will be no better time to try them out. If friends are also being creative, why not think about one thing you can teach each other? Just connect to each other by Zoom and discuss each other's creative masterpieces.

There are many simple ways to start drawing or colouring in with plenty of patterns available free on the internet. Once your work is completed get a frame and start your own personal art collection.



16. SELF-REFLECTION

Very few of us find time to do yoga or meditate in our busy lives. But maybe this time period can be utilised to self-reflect and contemplate our lives. Set an hour every morning to spend on the balcony or in the garden to meditate and engage in some yoga to keep yourself feeling fresh and happy.



17. DE-STRESS

The current circumstances have left us all feeling anxious. Engaging in some breathing exercises or meditation to calm the nerves will help ease the stress. Keep yourself calm during this time and take part in activities that relax you to keep the panic from spreading...yoga, tai chi, mindfulness. Maybe we can't stop COVID-19 at present, but we can sure combat stress.



18. BECOME A PLANT-PARENT

We've all probably bought a plant at some point in our lives that has eventually died of neglect or lack of care. Well, this is the time to work on your parenting skills! Adopt a plant or two. Find your inner green thumb and get gardening to keep yourself busy in self-isolation.



19. START A VEGETABLE GARDEN

Maybe you can't go out to purchase new seeds, seedlings or plants, but everyone has vegetables or fruits at the house to eat. Collecting their seeds and planting them in your garden, flowerpot or window box could give you a start to your vegetable garden that can be quite successful and give you fresh produce in the next few months.



Remember gardening is the Green Gym with free veggies thrown in

20. SPEND TIME WITH YOUR PETS

If there's one being that does not mind all the time you spend at home, it's probably your pet. Maybe your cat is not so bothered but your dog is probably having the time of his life. Take this time to play with your pets as much as you can, give them some love, and just be busy keeping them happy!



Click [HERE](#) to join Pat, Chat and Walk a Day on the COTA Facebook and post a story about your best friend and how important they are to you keeping you fit while walking.

CONCLUSION

By the time you reach the end of this book, here's hoping that you try some of the ideas. Once you get started, you will realise how beneficial these can be for you for a productive break from your regular routine.

While trying to work on ourselves, let's not forget the real reason for the self-isolation. Keep yourself and the others around you safe as you try to make it through this period. While you're enjoying your time off, read up on COVID-19 and ways to prevent it from spreading. **Stay Safe Stay Well.**

Ron Smith

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ron Smith, Managing Director of Corporate Media Communications Pty Ltd, has over four decades of experience in the media advising both the private sector and government in relation to media and community strategies.

Ron has worked with the Urban Land Authority for twelve years; he was responsible for the communication program to establish the Docklands Authority and was the independent media adviser and strategist for the Local Government Board during the Victorian Council amalgamations. Currently he is the Chairman of the Think Pink Foundation – a breast cancer charity; a Board Member of Tradeswomen Australia and a Councillor of the Victorian Artists Society.



Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria is the leading not-for-profit organisation representing the interests and rights of people aged over 50 in Victoria. For nearly 70 years, we have led government, corporate and community thinking about the positive aspects of ageing. Today, our focus is on promoting opportunities for, and protecting the rights of, older Victorians.

COTA Information Line 1300 13 50 90

Do you need help finding information about?

- Pensions and concessions
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- ... or anything else?

Our friendly Information Officers will speak to you over the phone, find the information you need and either email you, post information out to you or refer you on to the right organisation.

The COTA Information Line is staffed **9.30 am to 4.00 pm Monday to Friday**. If you call outside these hours and leave a message, we will return your call.

Contact COTA Victoria

Level 4, 533 Little Lonsdale Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Phone (03) 9655 2100 1300 13 50 90

Fax (03) 9655 2199

Email askcota@cotavic.org.au

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