

Ten Ways to Stay Motivated During Quarantine

The Startup-Medium written by Sophia Beams

It can be difficult to find a daily routine during quarantine. But here are some tips to keep your day in check while we're all stuck at home.

Quarantine has definitely been getting me down lately. It's hard to stay productive when you're stuck inside all day. But I've managed to find a few ways to keep myself working (and entertained) during shelter-in-place. Here's a list of my favorite methods to keep quarantine claustrophobia away.

1. To-Do List

To-do lists *definitely* aren't for everyone. Even I don't like using them sometimes. But it can certainly be helpful when fleshing out your quarantine routine. Your to-do lists don't have to be composed of things you don't want to do: you can fill them with hobbies you enjoy, books you want to read, activities you want to do. I just write mine down in the Notes section of my iPhone and check them off with a little emoji when I've completed them. It's all stuff that I legitimately want to do: it just helps to remind me that, even when it's difficult to establish order and control, I can always rely on the things that keep me happy. Plus, it's a huge boredom-buster: if I don't have anything to do, I can head straight to my list to see if there's something I can check off. My work-free checklist! I don't worry about checking everything off, but I do get to feel good about the fun things I did for myself each day!

2. Set Your Alarm!

You'll need to keep waking up at a semi-regular time each day if you want to get anything done. Working from home isn't always easy, and it's okay to slip up a few times (believe me, I know how tempting that "snooze" button can be). But even if you end up setting your alarm for a little later than you might normally, make sure that it's set for the same time each day. Getting up at the same time will ensure that your body maintains its natural sleep cycle. This means that you won't be left feeling tired or out of sorts throughout the day, and you'll be able to get to bed at a reasonable time at night. Be sure to set your alarm later for the weekends, though (if that's what you would do normally) since that will give you a little extra sleep boost and allow your body to relax more since you're not working.

3. Get Online Help

Thanks to coronavirus, a lot of services have moved online temporarily. This means that therapists, teachers, gym instructors, even dermatologists can all be found on the web. Don't stress if you're missing your regular appointments: you should be able to find almost everything you need online, even if it's through a different provider. And don't forget to check your work benefits as well: many companies are offering employees extra benefits to stay healthy and happy at home.

4. Separate Work and Home

Easier said than done, right? Technically, home and work are in the same place right now. But you should try to separate them as much as possible. If you can, have a dedicated “work” room in your house. Get as separate as possible: I’m not saying that everyone needs to have a home office, but try not to work from your bedroom. Once you start working in a room frequently, you’ll find that whenever you try to relax and enjoy yourself in that room, you’ll only be able to think of work. Don’t type up reports from your bed, or else you won’t be able to sleep at night for thinking about work. If you have enough space, dedicate a separate room to your work. If you don’t, try clearing a certain seat or table in your kitchen, a specific chair in your living room that you don’t use often to work. Heck, you can make a blanket fort in the corner of your bedroom and work from there. It doesn’t matter where you are, it just matters that you’re keeping “work” and “home” spaces separate. If you’re totally out of space, at least try moving around every day while you work so that your brain can’t start viewing one space as your “workspace”.

5. Take Media Breaks

It’s pretty important to stay up-to-date with everything that’s happening in the news, but it’s never healthy to stress about it all day long. Take a few minutes out of your day in the morning (but not right after you wake up!) to scroll through your news feeds, but don’t keep obsessing over it all day long. Try to follow up your daily news brief with happier articles or by doing something you enjoy to keep your day upbeat. And remember, despite everything that’s going on right now, there are lots of good things going on in the world as well. For example, check out [John Krasinski’s new newscast, *Some Good News*](#), to brighten your day.

6. ...And Social Media Breaks, Too

There’s a [handy-dandy feature in your iPhone settings](#) that will set time limits for apps you want to try to stay off of ([here’s](#) the how-to for androids). Social media is great for catching up with friends (or, hey, memes) but it’s also a huge time-sucker and de-motivator. Do whatever you need to do to keep yourself off it. If you use social media to contact and keep up with your friends and family, try to use a direct messaging app rather than a distracting social media app to catch up with everyone. Or, devote twenty minutes of your day to checking in with friends online, and then drop your phone off in another room before you start work. And even though staying at home seems like the perfect excuse to finally turn your ringer back on (I think mine has been on silent for three years now) don’t do it! In fact, switch Do Not Disturb on to keep distractions on the down-low. There’s nothing worse than getting into the zone and having a ding or buzz pull you right back out of it. Phone off and upside down for the ultimate distraction-free work environment.

7. Exercise

It’s hard for me to exercise on a regular day, much more so when I’m stuck in an indoor rut. But I have been able to find some fun things to do that get me back on track. Keep yourself healthy by exercising at least three times a week. Join an online fitness class, follow along with instructional videos or series, find dance workouts online, take up running, or explore a workout activity that you’ve never gotten the chance to try before. On your days off, try to get outside as much as possible by going for walks, biking around, or driving to the grocery store to fight to the death over toilet paper (actually, please don’t do that). Whenever you have time to fit exercise into your routine, go for it, but I always find morning workouts particularly helpful when starting my day. Anything that energizes you and tires you out will help you survive quarantine: it will help you sleep better at night, give you more energy throughout the day, and help keep your mind and body healthy while you’re stuck inside.

8. Self-Care

Motivating yourself to work is wonderful, but it's extremely important to take some time just for you as well. It feels more natural to take some time off to relax when we have regular schedules, which leaves many of us unintentionally working extra hours when our natural routine is disrupted. And if quarantine has you feeling unproductive, you might have a mindset that says you don't "deserve" any time for yourself if you can't keep up your regular work schedule. But that's not true! You should always leave time for yourself at the end of your day: it will help stabilize your daily routine. Skincare, bubble baths, Netflix, video games: something that makes you feel happy, relaxed, and is entirely unrelated to your work life. I've certainly been taking the time to try out some new face masks (and some new TV shows). Giving yourself time to chill out will help you de-stress and leave you feeling more refreshed the next day. Quarantine doesn't mean that you suddenly have productive superpowers, so don't work yourself into a slump by denying yourself breaks or evenings off.

Remember, it can be difficult to spend all day staring at a screen when working online, so make sure to give your eyes a rest if you think they need it (swap your nightly TV session for something less technological if your eyes are hurting or feel teary).

9. Take Advantage of Quarantine Opportunities

You don't need to come back a master chef or art critic, but there are a *lot* of special online opportunities being released because of quarantine. Museums are releasing virtual art exhibits that you can explore for free, science exhibits and zoos are live-streaming their animal friends online. Even colleges are releasing free online classes and tutoring sessions if you're interested in learning something new or adding a little something to your resume. Musical artists are having fun on their social media accounts: quarantine comedy songs, special releases, and short tunes are being published by the second to keep everyone happy while they're stuck inside. Plus, lots of online classes, streaming services, and subscriptions are offering special deals during quarantine so that you can enjoy quality content for cheap. If you see deals like these, go for it: they're perfect for keeping you entertained! And don't forget to support small businesses and arts centers if you can: theaters, Etsy shops, local restaurants, and other small or performance-related centers are struggling right now, so donating to them will help them out a lot! You could even score special newsletters, videos, or future discounts by supporting them during quarantine.

10. Don't Be So Hard On Yourself

Quarantine is *difficult*, and we're all working through it differently. There's no need to compare yourself with Karen on Twitter who claims to have learned thirty different languages, mastered the art of flambé, and written fourteen best-selling novels during her time in quarantine. Instead, focus on yourself and achieving small things. If the best thing that you can do in quarantine is simply live through it, *that is worth celebrating!* You are an amazing person, and you don't have to be some uber-productive entrepreneur during quarantine to prove it. Take time for yourself and give yourself lots of love while you're stuck indoors, and that is enough.