

Being Well Despite COVID



We are in a pandemic. This is no news and unfortunately lockdown, isolation, and restrictive measures get prolonged over and over again. We are aware that you as a university student may be particularly affected by these circumstances, not being able to see your friends or family, being faced with isolation and missing out these famous best weeks of your life. However, the situation is as it is, and this is why we want to help you stay mentally healthy despite the madness out there.

With the following tips, tricks, and links to further information or websites, we hope to be able to ease some of your stress, boredom, or loneliness:



HOW TO FACE A PANDEMIC

1 Stay informed - not overwhelmed

In times of a pandemic and constantly changing developments on public health and political levels, it is important to stay up to date with current measures and situations. However, be aware that the media tends to exaggerate and sensationalise news! So try to restrict your informational sources to credible ones, such as rivm.nl and who.int and plan one fixed time that is blocked for news checking - outside of this time slot, try to keep the news app closed.



2 Put things into perspective

It may not seem like it at the moment, but the current crisis is not the first one that we overcame, both as a society and you as an individual. Try to think about how you handled prior difficult situations, such as a breakup or the moment you left your family and friends to move to another city to study - what helped you back then? Can you still make use of these resources? Try to write down three strengths that helped you before. These may help you to build resilience and brace yourself for the upcoming weeks. And remember: Everything's gonna be alright!

3 Share!

Virtually everyone is in the same boat with you. Even if you feel like it, you are definitely not alone with your feelings of loneliness, boredom, or anxiety. Stay in touch with your friends and family and share how you are feeling - you'll be surprised how many will answer with: Damn, me too! - A sorrow shared might be a sorrow halved.



4 Concentrate on what you can control

The uncertainty surrounding the pandemic is omnipresent and may leave you power- and helpless. First of all, you are not alone in this and a lot of people experience the exact same feelings of uncontrollability! Just remind yourself that it is okay to feel these negative feelings and that it is not your fault that things may feel like they're out of hand. There are still things you can do to face the pandemic, such as washing your hands and keeping your distance. And for the rest - try to focus on the things you can control in your daily life, such as your thesis, your guitar, or your household.

5 Be mindful

Yes, it sounds cheesy, but accepting negative emotions as what they are may already help you leave them behind. Mindfulness tries to teach you how to accept adverse feelings and let them pass by. Otherwise, we tend to focus on these feelings without being able to taking our minds off all these negativity swirling around in our minds. **Meditation** or keeping a **Gratitude Journal** may help you in becoming more mindful. Moreover, it may help you to schedule 15 minutes every day as your rumination quarter - here you can make space for all these worries flying around in your head. Put the worries emerging outside of your rumination quarter down on a post-it and put it away until your next rumination quarter comes. Then you will have enough time to think about that one as well.

HOW TO CONTINUE DAILY LIFE

1 Try to keep a healthy lifestyle

We all know that we have to sleep enough, eat healthy, and exercise regularly. Still, it is hard to keep healthy habits going, especially with our daily movement missing because we are not biking to the university or our friends anymore. Nonetheless there already are initiatives that try to help you with these! For instance, the UG offers [e-health courses on sleep routines](#). Beyond that, you can use apps such as [Ommetje](#) to put at least some fun in your daily walk. Or what about a [30-day yoga challenge](#)? Already 30 minutes of movement are sufficient for your daily dose of exercise - and cleaning your house or going for a walk totally counts!

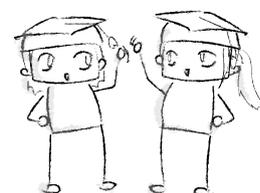


2 Create your own structure

When education went online, we lost our daily structure. Lectures can be watched anytime, so why bother waking up at 8am? Still, it is incredibly important to keep some kind of structure. Actually, this is the best opportunity to create your own structure, just as flexibly as you always wanted it to be! So try to wake up roughly at the same time every day, schedule meal breaks regularly and don't forget to plan breaks as well and fill these with enjoyable things. Try to include time for studying, but also time for socialising or simply for yourself. You may even consider scheduling some time [offline and away from your phone](#).

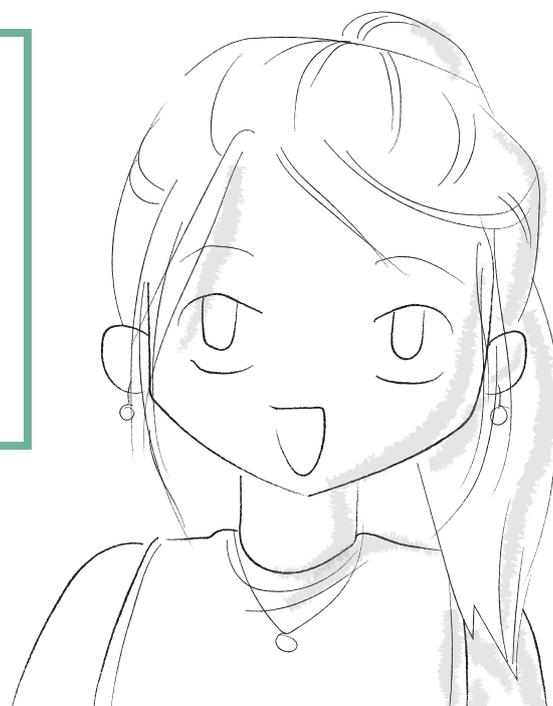
3 Socialise and have fun!

Yes, keeping social contact online is only half the fun - but it still is half the fun, so make the most out of it! Try to keep in touch with your friends, maybe via gather.town, where you can already implement some online games. Some suggestions: Have you already tried [online pictictionary](#), [guessing where google maps put you](#), or the [Jackbox Games](#)? Also some board games can be played online meanwhile, such as [Dominion](#) or [Code Names](#)! Or you just order the exact same food with friends of yours miles away and watch the exact same movie via [Netflix party](#) to share as much of an experience as possible. And don't forget to have fun on your own - put on your favourite song and dance, no one's gonna see you anyway.



4 Treat yourself

These times are hard enough, don't make them even harder on yourself. Even with you sitting there and having gotten up today, you are worth a treat. What about taking a long bath, one of the books piling up unread, that one bike tour you always wanted to do, or simply ordering a three-course-menu. Why? Just because you earned it. Like that, you can still create memories!



HOW TO STUDY DURING LOCKDOWN



1 Try techniques to enhance your concentration

Have you ever heard of the pomodoro technique? To prevent you from studying hard for hours and hours, whilst being distracted all the time, checking Twitter while writing up your results and at the end of the day feeling like you've actually accomplished nothing at all, try to work in sprints and plan fixed breaks. The **Pomodoro Technique** suggests to work 25 minutes and then take 5 minutes off. After having repeated this procedure, you have earned yourself some time off, so: Take a break!

2 Set boundaries!



We just have to admit, keeping our daily life running is freaking difficult in times of COVID. Writing a thesis, regularly attending seminars and getting your manuscript done in time, while worrying about your family, your future, and your finances are a lot. Here, we just want to remind you that it is completely fine to set boundaries. You are allowed to say 'No!' if you are not feeling like it - to your friend wanting to meet up inside while you're not feeling comfortable with that, to your housemates wanting to play a game while you really need time for yourself, or to your professor who expects too much of you - maybe they are more understanding than you know. You could make three 'No'-cards to use in three situations every week in which you don't feel strong enough to say 'No' yourself.

LASTLY,

don't forget that the University of Groningen already offers support. Ask your **study advisor** for study-related troubles, contact the **Student Service Center** for psychological issues, or look into the UG's **e-health support** to stay healthy during these troubling times. Beyond that, we want to draw your attention to **posters designed by Dr Zoë J Ayres** about academic well-being of undergraduate and Master students, which may help you keep your mental health also after the COVID-19 pandemic.

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