

## IN CLOSE QUARTERS

---

Living with others during an uncertain and stressful time, requires great patience, understanding and coordination. Read on for some tips on how to manage your relationships while staying at home.

1. Keep in mind that everyone has different ways of coping. Some of us will spring into action, while others will take a back seat to process their emotions. Some of us cope by planning and looking to the future, while the rest of us take things day by day. Think of differences in coping as complimenting one another vs a source of division.
2. Focus on creating space for the range of emotions everyone in the household is feeling. It is likely you are feeling the same things as everyone else, just not necessarily all at the same time.
3. Take a quick stress test when you wake in the morning. On a scale of 1-10 how anxious/irritable/snappy etc do you feel today? Let your partner, family members or housemates know and check in with them too. By cueing others in to where we are at we can prevent or minimise tensions rising!
4. Learn about what your needs are and who might be able to help you with these. Remember no one person can be everything to everyone!
5. It is normal during a time of prolonged stress to experience more tension in our interactions. It can be helpful to anticipate this and discuss how to respond when someone is feeling anxious, irritable, angry or sad. For example, try having a code word or phrase for when things are getting difficult for you (or the other person) and you need to press pause and find some space. Just remember it is still important at some stage to return to the conversation to resolve any conflict.
6. Focus on responding rather than reacting. This can be tough when we're feeling emotional but is a useful skill to practice during self-isolation.

7. Try to let minor issues go and practice giving yourself and others the benefit of the doubt. Some people find it helpful to write down their thoughts and feelings or talk through the issue with someone else. This is often helpful to give us a different perspective.
8. If you find yourself feeling upset or irritated by the behaviour of someone you live with, take some time to think about what you would like them to do differently. Aim to come up with a request rather than a complaint or criticism.
9. Moving back in with your parents can be challenging when the last time you lived with them was when you were a teenager. You may find that your parents slide into treating you as if you were seventeen again! Demonstrate to your parents that you're an adult by avoiding any adolescent-esque outbursts which can be easy to slip into when we're stressed. Try having a conversation with your parents about working on a new parent-adult child relationship while in isolation together.
10. Have a conversation about the logistics of living through the pandemic. Consider creating zones in the home for study and work, relaxation, interaction and also alone time. Agree to be respectful of others when they're working and keep the shared spaces tidy and clean.
11. Use this time to also talk through the "what if" scenarios together. It can be helpful to consider:
  - a. Social contact (e.g. cooking at different times, how firm does everyone agree to be with their social distancing)
  - b. Cleanliness (e.g. regularly disinfecting surfaces, using separate hand towels)
  - c. A response plan if someone becomes unwell (e.g. unwell person to wear a mask if they need to enter shared living areas).

Some of you may be living with people, who no matter how hard you try, do not understand your position and/or won't change their behaviour. In this instance it can be helpful to talk to someone in your personal or professional support network.