

Strategies to Increase Functioning While Following Social Distancing for Patients with Chronic Pain

*This handout is intended for clinician use (not for patient distribution) to help with brainstorming ideas about increasing functioning with social distancing to support their patients during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It was created by the SPP Pain SIG Clinical Committee. We hope that this is a helpful resource for our colleagues to both affirm and expand your creative toolbox for supporting patients with chronic pain during this pandemic.

- **Increase Daily Activity**

- Brainstorm ways to increase daily movement & add new activities
- Start of school = new year goals
- Recruit friends or family to join on a new project
- “Block Schedule”
 - Schedule 2-4 tasks in each “block” of the day
 - Blocks: Morning, afternoon, evening
 - Gradually increase the number of activities in each block

- **Establishing/Maintaining Daily Routine**

- Establish a daily calendar to follow during the week
 - Include activities to complete daily and during the week
 - Include daily:
 - Exercise, meals, class time, school work time, family time, social time, and self-care
 - Add things that you can feel proud to check off your list:
 - Plan/cook dinner once/week
 - Clean your room
 - Help with chores around the house
 - Work on an art project or home improvement project
 - Learn a new skill/hobby
 - Play an instrument
 - Learn a new language
 - Photography
 - Watercolor or oil painting
 - Knit or sew
 - Origami
 - Bake or Cook
 - Find a volunteer job/ way to help your community
 - Write letters to older/lonely family members or neighbors
- Sleep
 - Set regular bed and wake times
 - Schedule something motivating to help you wake up in the morning
 - Exercise Zoom call with a friend
 - Make a favorite/fancy breakfast (French toast, waffles, eggs, etc.)

- Reward yourself for waking up AND getting out of bed on time
 - Make sure you're getting some natural light during the day (go outside!)
 - Get to Bed on Time
 - Set a reminder to get off screens 30-60 minutes prior to bed, and make sure silent mode is turned on/notifications are turned off
 - Tell your friends when your bedtime is – stick to it!
 - Plan your evening so homework and self-care are already completed
 - Schedule enjoyable and relaxing bedtime routine for the 1 hour prior to bed (avoid screens during this time)
 - Look at magazines, read a favorite book
 - Paint or do crafts
 - Adult coloring books
 - Play a card game, do crosswords or Sudoku
- **Increasing Social Engagement**
 - Plan ahead with friends, family friends, or extended family to have activities to look forward to
 - Make sure every week has at least 1-2 fun social activities scheduled
 - Creative Socially Distanced Activities at Home
 - Backyard bonfire
 - Outdoor movie – use a projector and a white bed sheet to watch movies with friends
 - Set out chairs or blankets that are 6 feet apart
 - Provide each person with their own bowl of popcorn/snacks/drinks
 - Host an outdoor exercise class or painting session
 - Plan an “un-birthday” party for a friend – make your own yard decorations and arrange for friends to do a drive-by
 - Out of the House in-person activities
 - Socially distanced walk with friends (wear masks)
 - Go on a hike with friends (wear masks & try to keep distanced)
 - Have a “car picnic” in an empty parking lot – everyone bring their own food
 - Picnic in a park – everyone bring their own chairs or blankets to keep the space
 - Continue Virtual Social activities
 - Schedule a Zoom call with friends – plan ahead so everyone plans to join
 - HouseParty app – invite distant family or friends to join for an online “game night”
 - This app has videoconferencing with groups while playing games with friends
 - A game similar to apples to apples, Pictionary, and Trivia (pick categories)
 - Play virtual board games: monopoly, clue, Uno, Boggle, Scrabble, Ticket to Ride, Settlers of Catan, Code Names, ...or look for other favorite options online!

Maybe feel brave enough to play Pandemic and see if you can work together to beat the game.

- Set up a virtual quiz with a group of friends: each person gets a category (e.g., music, movies, “in the news”, geography, science and nature) and comes up with 5 questions
- Schedule a weekly video call with a friend or family member
- Video games – many patients connect with peers through video games
 - As always, encourage parent oversight as needed & limits with video game time to not impede with other socializing & daily activities.
- Virtual ice cream (or popcorn or pizza) tasting – send a group the links for the same items & video conference together to taste them
- Virtual movie watching – plan to watch at the same time or use Netflix Party
- Virtual Book Club – challenge friends or family to read a book (or watch a movie/documentary) about racial disparities & schedule a Video call to discuss
- Virtual cooking class – each week nominate a different friend/family member to lead a cook-along (send ingredient list in advance)
- Schedule a day trip with your immediate family
 - Pick a park, town, beach, or mountain within a short drive & plan to all go together
 - Yes, the family you’ve been quarantined with can be fun if you pick something new & fun to do!
- **Increasing Physical Exercise**
 - Join an online fitness challenge
 - Do online classes (Zumba, core strengthening, pilates) with a friend (virtually) or family member
 - Recruit a parent or sibling to train with you
 - Running, weight lifting, core strengthening, fitness challenge
 - Add core exercises as “breaks” throughout the school day or on the hour
 - Set a timer or phone reminder
 - Take 30-60 second breaks for exercise
 - Squats, wall sits, sit ups, planks, burpees, push-ups
 - Stretching
 - 3 favorite yoga poses
 - Add brief movement breaks during the day
 - Run up and down the stairs
 - Challenge yourself to increase number of sets or decrease your time
 - Walk the hall or pace in your room (like you would typically walk in the hallways between classes)
 - Schedule 2 times/day for exercise
 - Set one (short) exercise time in the morning to help increase focus, motivation, and decrease fatigue

- Walk, lift weights, core exercises, yoga
 - Run or bike
 - Schedule second time for cardio exercise (20-30 minutes daily)
 - Online dance classes or exercise videos
 - Fitness challenges
 - Walk, speed walk, run
 - Ride bikes
 - Trial exercising mid-day to see if it boosts your energy/focus
 - Take a long lunch
 - Exercise between 3-4pm
 - Avoid exercise right before bed
 - Schedule several monthly fun physical activities
 - Hiking trips
 - Family
 - Socially distanced walk with a friend
 - Compete with friends or extended family members to improve time/distance/weights or reps
 - Outdoor sunrise or sunset yoga
 - Make sure you're still following your pacing program (i.e., don't do so much on the days you're feeling good that you feel terrible the next day and can't move!)
- **Sources for reference:**
 - CDC Guidelines:
 - General CDC info: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
 - School related: from 6/30: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-testing.html>
 - American Academy of Pediatrics Guidelines:
 - Return to school: <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>
 - National Association of School Psychologists – COVID Resources: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center>
 - World Health Organization:
 - General: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019?gclid=CjwKCAjwgdX4BRB_EiwAg8O8HVMlKYxWtkpc1qJvc2zwnIV_EJlAleJkj_JdumzmWkjbQWPrwvxbaYxoCm7QQAvD_BwE
 - School Recs (3/2020): https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/key-messages-and-actions-for-covid-19-prevention-and-control-in-schools-march-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=baf81d52_4&gclid=CjwKCAjwgdX4BRB_EiwAg8O8Ha0nju5gRaT8EKuiaKSMr5XEFTmTvzlxHbyijMLrDjZE6vwdc0t7cBoC5clQAvD_BwE

- American Psychological Association: <https://www.apa.org/topics/covid-19/>
- Check with local public health department recommendations
- ****Ask your hospital/department/media department for guidelines and talking points**