

# HOW TO CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF WHILE IN LOCKDOWN

MENTAL WELLBEING FACT SHEET

April 2020

In the hopes to “flatten the curve” by physical distancing as the COVID-19 pandemic spreads, many of us will be in lockdown at home. Physical isolation and sudden departure from familiar routines can be disorientating. Here are six “Daily Quarantine Questions” you can ask yourself to help structure your days—and to check in with yourself, to make sure you (and others) are doing OK.

## 1. What am I grateful for today?

Last month, recently freed Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera spoke at UC Berkeley. Someone asked how he survived 36 years in prison, 12 in solitary confinement. López Rivera responded that every morning he sang Violeta Parra’s song (later popularized by Mercedes Sosa) “Gracias a la Vida” (thank you to life).

What are you grateful for today? Take two minutes every day to make a list. Add to it throughout the day. You can share it with others through social media, or when you speak to them on the phone.

## 2. Who am I checking in on, or connecting with, today?

As many have rightly reframed it, it’s not social distance we need, but rather social solidarity while we maintain physical distance. Pick three people each day to check in on.

Call your grandmother. FaceTime/WhatsApp your mum. Text your friends. Check in on the neighbours.

## 3. What expectations of “normal” am I letting go of today?

We’re facing a global pandemic. The news is the stuff of nightmares. Whole states and countries are in lockdown. You’re suddenly either out of work or working from home while simultaneously running a home-school for rebellious “co-workers” and frantically disinfecting surfaces. It’s OK if you don’t get the inbox to zero by the end of the workday. It’s OK if the kids don’t learn anything today, but are still loved and alive by bedtime. Figure out what is actually important to

you in this moment and focus on that. Science fiction novelist Octavia Butler, who wrote about resilience and adaptation in dystopian times, tells us, “The only lasting truth is Change.” The faster we let go of expectations of “normal,” the faster we adapt.

## 4. How am I getting outside today?

Nature, fresh air, and sunshine are good for our nervous systems. While not all of us may be able to get to the trees or the ocean, simply leaving the house is helpful. Can you sit in the sun for 10 minutes? Step outside at night to see the moon? Even if you cannot physically get outside, can you open a window for fresh air? Or bring flowers inside?

## 5. How am I moving my body today?

Crisis heightens fear and anxiety. The more we can shift out of our heads and into our bodies, the more grounded we’ll feel. Take a 10-minute walk around the block. Run the stairs in your building. Do five push-ups. If you have limited mobility or fitness, can you roll your ankles in a circle while seated? Massage the tension out of your jaw? Put a hand on your heart to feel its beat?

## 6. What beauty am I creating, cultivating, or inviting in today?

Beauty is a powerful antidote to despair. Recognising the beauty in the world and bringing it into our lives is an affirmation of the life that still exists and is worth fighting for.

Becoming creators, not just consumers, of culture gives us agency and power. Grace Lee Boggs, the late philosopher and social activist from Detroit, taught us

that “a revolution that is based on people exercising creativity in the midst of devastation is one of the great historical contributions of mankind.” So, let’s write about our lives, draw our dreams, sing our sorrows, plant edible gardens, cook for our neighbours, repair our clothes, and create culture to survive the hard times wherever and however we can.

### **Seek additional support early where needed**

If you feel that the stress or anxiety you are experiencing as a result of COVID-19 is impacting your ability to function at home seek extra support.

### **Support services include:**

**MEMBER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
(Benestar)**

**1300 360 364**

**CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT SERVICES  
(CISS)/PEER SUPPORT**

**1800 049 933**

**CHAPLAINCY AND FAMILY SUPPORT**

**1800 049 933**