

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF DURING COVID-19

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As COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc across the US, as members of the aesthetics industry, we find ourselves grappling with its inevitable ripple effect—our doors being closed and what it means to be deemed “non-essential.” We miss our team, our patients, and the sense of comfort, familiarity and meaning we find through our work. The new territory of detachment, worry, and crisis management in our home away from home is unfamiliar and unsettling to say the least.

We must now accept operating from home, which can range from an office with a desk and a door to a laptop on the sofa or any makeshift variation in between. Children are home from school and spouses may also be working at home too. What began as a feeling of an extended weekend, now has the makings of a pressure cooker as professional and personal demands have multiplied. How can we manage both when the professional and personal lines have blurred? How can we thrive in our new normal?

It's very important to remember: You are not working from home; you are at your home during a crisis trying to work. And you are navigating these times without a road map. We are all on a journey...to where? We aren't sure and we don't know how long it will take us to arrive at our destination. Below are some tips to help you along the way.

PROTECT YOUR TIME

Now that your commute is virtually non-existent, the temptation to devote more hours to work is high. However, there is a tipping point when we are no longer productive. John Pencavel of Stanford University found that after 50 hours per week, resultant fatigue or stress not only reduces productivity, but it also increases the probability of errors, accidents, and sickness. How can we allocate our time to avoid burnout?

- Set a schedule
- Determine what you want to accomplish that day and stay focused
- Do not let unimportant, non-urgent tasks curtail your day
- Check email at certain time points during the day and do not apply a sense of urgency where it doesn't exist
- Schedule phone calls to minimize disruption and let some calls go to voicemail so you can readdress at a time that works well for you
- Add exercise and/or outdoor activity to your calendar each day

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TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Mental and physical health are always important, but never so critical as in today's environment. Inarguably the pandemic has placed an enormous amount of stress on ourselves, our colleagues, and our families. It's during these times we experience changes in our sleeping and eating patterns and ignore our mental well-being. Therefore, it's important to pay attention to our patterns and coping mechanisms and manage those that have a tendency toward the unhealthy. Here are some tips:

- Maintain daily grooming habits: When you look well-kept, you feel better and set a positive tone for the day.
- Practice gratitude: Every morning or each evening remind yourself of at least three things to be grateful for.
- Physical activity: Walk the dog, go for a run or a bike ride, use one of the thousands of fitness apps available—do at least 30 minutes of movement every day.
- Connect with others: Schedule calls with friends and family using FaceTime or Zoom to see familiar faces; set up a group text thread or use GroupMe or WhatsApp to remain social with friends, family, and work colleagues.
- Keep your sense of humor: Jokes are funny because they are based on a sense of common background, experiences, values, and shared belief structure. Sharing laughter with people is one way to bring joy into difficult situations.
- Give back to others and your community: Find out which local resources need help and pitch in. Giving back and making a difference is reinvigorating.

KEEP PERSPECTIVE

Perhaps Governor Andrew Cuomo said it best, "If you wake up each day expecting this to be over, you will be greatly disappointed." It's easy to focus on all that has been taken away, but it's important to look for what you have been given in return.

- Limit the exposure to news: Just because it's available, it doesn't mean you need to consume it.
- It's okay to acknowledge loss: Recognize it, mourn it and then find the silver lining.
- Embrace the change of pace: We will likely never have time like this again
 - Spend extra time with your family
 - Bake cookies for your neighbors
 - Perform random acts of kindness
 - Organize your closets, garage, or basement
 - Finish the projects you've always wanted to do but have never had the time to do so
 - Read a book
 - Listen to podcasts or take an online training
 - Embrace your favorite hobby or find a new one

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Like any journey, there are bound to be detours and roadblocks along the way. While we were put on this journey without our consent, we do have a choice on how we make it through to the other side. Over half of today's Fortune 500 companies were launched during a recession or bear market: Disney, GE®, Microsoft®, and Trader Joe's to name a few. As those before us who chose to confront the obstacles head-on, we too can navigate our way through this crisis and emerge with clarity, a new vision, and a defined purpose.

There are lots of inspiring acts occurring right now by both the leaders of large corporations, small business owners, and individual contributors. These acts have occurred throughout time and are often marked by inspiring quotes by leaders who faced such adversity including Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela, and other well-known figures. Of all people and places, my husband (an avid history buff) recently shared a quote with me that I found particularly relevant. It puts things in perspective when it comes to effectively leading through change: **"Start by doing what's necessary, then do what's possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible."**

In short, you don't necessarily have to possess unusual qualities or do something extraordinary—just take things one day, one challenge at a time and do what needs to be done.

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