HOW TO PROTECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING QUARANTINE

• **Get Dressed.** First, don’t give in to the immediate urge to sleep in and stay up late. Set your alarm for your usual time and stick with your morning routine. Shower, eat what you normally would, make the bed, etc. You can skip the work uniform and dress down, but do get dressed – don’t stay in pajamas.

• **If Telecommuting, Stick with Your Routine.** Be proactive and lay out an intentional structure for your day. Create a schedule of mealtimes, reading time, phone time, exercise, chores, etc. Write it down. Even if you have very few obligations, it will help you stay balanced to have different activities you regularly do at relatively set times. It’s ideal to have a mix of things you need to do and things you just like to do. This approach to your day is actually an evidence-based treatment for depression called “behavioral activation” that will also help prevent depression.

• **Plan Out Your Week.** Have a schedule for the week as well. Make weekends somewhat different, even if that means something simple like making a more elaborate breakfast or something more involved like embarking on a project. This combination of structure and variation keeps people settled but stimulated, both important for emotional well-being.

• **Go Outside.** If you’re not confined to the house, take daily walks or jogs, preferably in a green area. Exercise, sunlight and being around trees all benefit mood. If you’re stuck inside, try one of the many workouts that you can follow on the internet. Quarantine might give you more time to exercise than usual. Make it a challenge to increase your sit-ups, number of workouts a week, etc. Exercise has such a positive effect on mood it is actually a prescribed treatment for mild to moderate depression. Make it a priority on your daily schedule.