



NORWEGIAN
ARMED FORCES

COVID-19

A quick guide to coping with quarantine and isolation

When isolated and in quarantine some people will experience a number of stress reactions, while others don't. Both are considered to be normal under the circumstances. There are however a number of things that one can do to ease and alleviate the stress of a quarantine situation:

- **Establish daily routines:** Set regular times for meals and make a distinction between weekend and weekdays. Make use of whatever leisure activities available and set yourself goals for the period of time in quarantine (e.g., set up a plan for the week and schedule activities). This will aid in breaking up the monotony and help you to structure your everyday life better.
- **Find a sense of the purpose of quarantine/isolation:** Quarantine is a preventive measure to minimize risk for other personnel. It is important that you maintain your physical and mental health, in order to keep yourself operational for your unit. Try to think of a project you can work with during the period (e.g., practice or teach yourself something relevant to your profession or read a book)
- **Keep to the facts:** Limit how much you read or watch the news and be critical to the various media-sources, especially articles that you find on social media. Use well known sources like the Norwegian Institute of Public Health for information on Covid-19 in Norway (www.fhi.no/en/id/infectious-diseases/coronavirus) and use established media sources to read news (e.g., www.bbc.com/news). Limit how many times you check the news per day (1-2 times) and take regular breaks from your smartphone/laptop.
- **Maintain a normal sleep-cycle:** Make sure you establish a set routine for when you go to bed and when you get up in the morning. Waking up at the same time each day improves sleep-quality. Avoid daytime sleeping and ensure that you are exposed to enough daylight each day. Room temperature should be between 16-20 degrees Celsius when sleeping.
- **Maintain a varied and healthy diet:** (e.g., eat fruits, vegetables, cod liver oil dietary supplements) during the period of quarantine/isolation. Avoid excessive amounts of caffeine. Drink water instead, - to ensure adequate hydration.
- **Exercise regularly:** If possible, spend time outside in fresh air and go for walks or runs. Make physical training and exercise a part of your weekly plans and set goals for each week. If you are not able to exercise outdoors, try using an alternative form of training (exercise in your room, hallway or the staircase in your building using your own bodyweight, e.g., push-ups, sit-ups, squats etc.).
- **Stay in contact with your friends and family** by using social media such as video calls, telephone calls and messages. Through social contact, you may discover that your feelings are quite normal, and you may be able to share coping skills and reduce stress. You may also find that you need to have some time alone. If you are sharing a room with other people you should all reach an agreement about how to facilitate this for all of you. One way to «tune out» and relax can be to listen to music and watch movies using a headset.
- **Remember that when people find themselves in stressful situations, it is normal to experience negative reactions to this.** Such psychological reactions can be regarded as normal responses to being in an unnatural situation. Our brain is designed to protect us, and it will by default focus on potential threats and trigger various fear responses that we can perceive as stress reactions and negative thoughts. This fact can be useful to keep in mind, as it may give us a tendency to overestimate the possibility of a negative outcome and at the same time underestimate our own ability to cope with the situation.
- **Make use of other stress reducing techniques:** There may be other stress reducing techniques than those listed above that can be useful to focus on and that you may have found helpful in the past. Remember that humor in itself can be stress reducing. By using humor actively, you might lighten the mood for yourself and the others.