

Happy

A HUMAN-CENTRIC,
FACT-BASED AND
EMPOWERING GUIDE

& efficient

at Home

TO OVERCOMING #COVID19
AS INNOVATORS

amurabi x **neuro@work**
A new perspective on change management

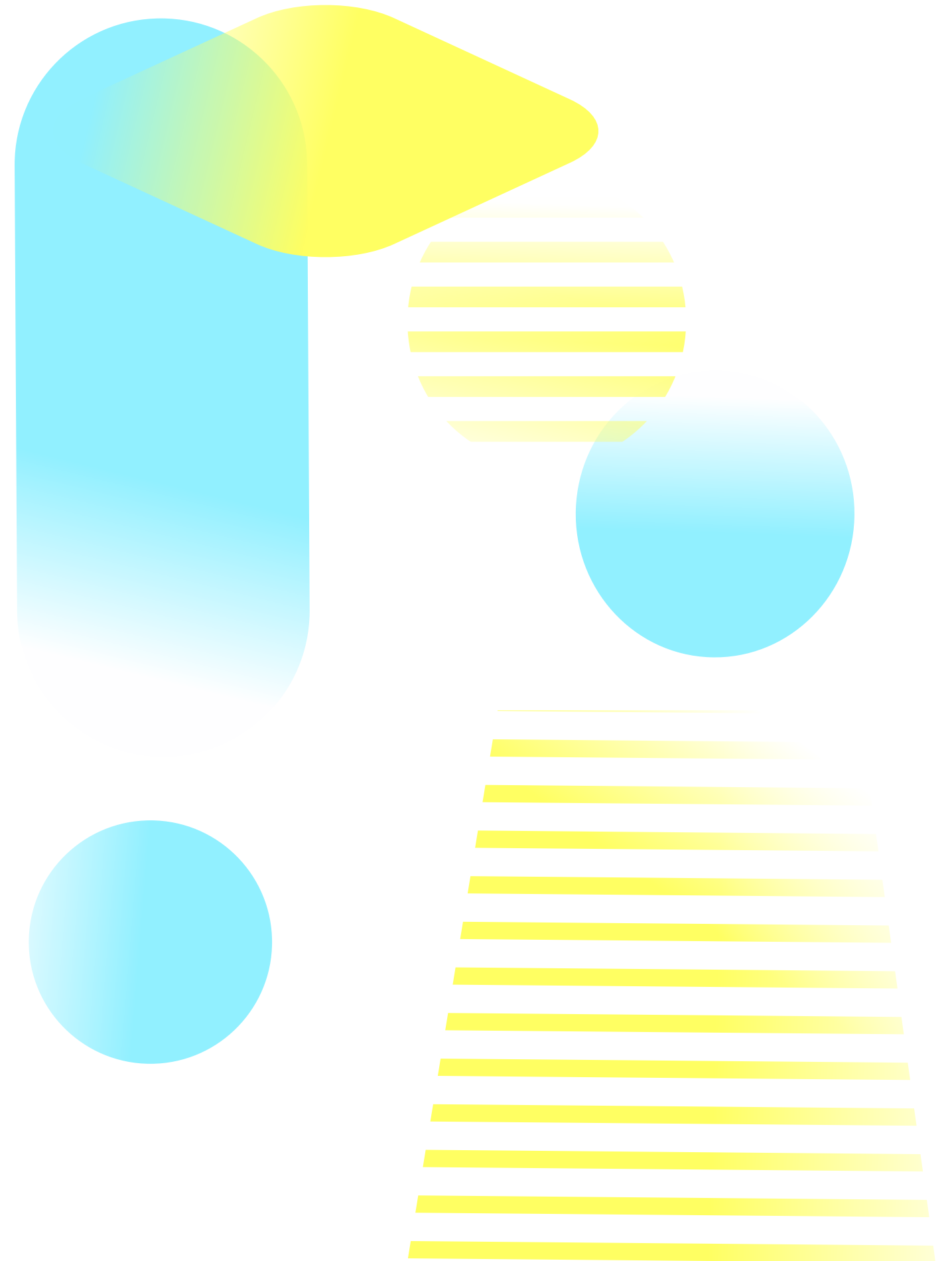
It's not everyday you can save the world by staying in your pijamas.

The message is clear: #stayathome, #savelives

But how to #workremotely, to stay focused while worrying for loved ones and the world, keeping the kids under control and still find a minimum of joy, calm, or a sense of purpose in this turmoil?

We're problem solvers, so we've researched the best advice from around the world. Here's a **human-centric, fact-based and empowering practical guide** to overcoming #Covid19 crisis as innovators, written with the wonderful [Dominique Ashby](#), expert in change management based on neuroscience.

Because we're all human, we've organized this guide into the types of things you may be feeling or experiencing during this time of extensive and sudden change.



“I don't even know where to start, this is just too much for me”

“I want to work, and do something concrete, but I'm not used to remote-working tools”

“How can I keep contact with my team and continue to collaborate?”

“I just need some good news, once in a while”

“ Remote working? Easy! Except with kids at home! ”

“I need mental oxygen”

“I need my dose of arts and culture!”

“I want to help!”

"I don't even know where to start, this is just too much for me"

Remember that it's ok to not know or have control over everything - we are all in the same position of navigating this new world, discovering the best way for us as individuals and families to thrive over the coming months.



Here are a couple of simple steps that will help you to reduce that feeling of being overwhelmed and retain the power of rational decision making :

Focus on what you can control, not what you can't. For example, your morning routine is something you can control. Beginning your day doing things you've consciously decided to do provides you with a real sense of control and increases the certainty with which you begin your day.

Your immediate benefits :

- Reduces the activation of anxiety/fear centers in the brain
- Enables the areas of the brain involved in rational decision making
- Inhibits your fear centers
- Activates the reward centers in your brain, releasing "feel good" chemicals.

By designing your ideal morning routine, you'll be starting your day from a position of strength.

[Click here for concrete morning routine tips](#)

As a species, we're starting to suffer from information overload and fast learning the value of being selective with the information we give our time and attention to. During times like these, it's worth in particular :

Avoiding news overload: do not watch, or listen to, non-stop news, it will only raise anxiety.

Picking a couple of reliable sources, e.g. World Economic Forum, which namely contains precise answers by a virology expert on key questions, the World Health Organization created a comprehensive site with clear advice, a good FAQ and reliable situation reports. Checking your chosen sources once a day is enough

Fighting fake news with these tips from a Stanford communication professor on [NextGov](#) and the well-known [décodeurs of Le Monde](#) who have been doing a great job for several years

Learning how to make data-driven decisions, according to Google's Chief Data Scientist

It may also be the right time to turn to renowned professors, sociologists and philosophers, who shed a soothing light on current events :

Olivier Sibony, an associate professor of strategy at HEC offers some analysis as to [Why we were so blind](#) to Covid-19, in spite of scientific data. He explains how this delay had to do with a range of cognitive biases at play when we face uncertainty and danger

Philosopher and psychiatrist **Cynthia Fleury**, who namely heads the Philosophy chair at psychiatric hospital Saint-Anne, wrote a brilliant book in 2019 "[healing is humanism](#)". She raises key questions on how healing others makes us all grow, how a civilisation that no longer heals could be void

Sociologist and philosopher **Hartmut Rosa** offers some thoughts as to [slowing down to regain control](#).

“I want to work, and do something concrete, but I’m not used to remote-working tools”

That’s OK, there’s a start to everything. Here’s a step-by-step guide, by the best remote work experts around the globe to be more effective than ever before:

Law Without Walls is a part-virtual educational model created by legal innovator Michele DeStefano in 2010 and supported by The University of Miami School of Law. Over the past decade, they’ve facilitated dozens of creative work sessions online, with students, users and facilitators participating from around the globe. They offer their best tips and [free webinars on remote working](#)

Gitlab is the world’s largest all-remote company, with 1200 employees in 65 countries and over 14 years of experience in remote working: they’ve tried it all! And the good news is that they believe most companies are already remote to some extent. Their guide includes key advice on topics such as [Transitioning to remote](#), [Meetings](#), [Management](#), [Scaling](#) and [Building culture](#)

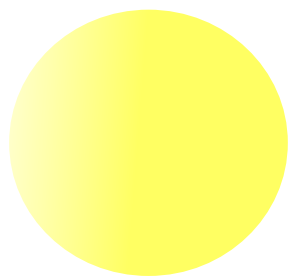
Faber Novel created a [very practical guide with a cool bot to assess your remote working readiness and learn good practices](#)

The inspiring legal innovator Erika Pagano also shares her top 5 tips to [teach remotely](#)

If your teams use project management tools (for example Trello), you can use the system to automate deadline reminders, rather than send them manually. In a time of physical distancing it’s important to try and focus virtual touchpoints with your teams on substantive and human-centric topics that really add something to their day. Chasing people on deadlines is necessary, but not a substantive or human connection, so use technology to help take it off your to-do-list.

Things to remember when living in a virtual world :

To get a good night’s sleep, turn off your devices at least 1 hour before you go to bed. If you’re finding you need to work in the evenings, install software on your computer that reduces the amount of blue light your screen emits, or order online a pair of glasses that block blue light. This is because blue light emitted from any screen stops your body from going into sleep mode. Some computers (for example the MS Surface Pro range) and phones can be programmed to switch to a reduced blue-light setting after certain times of day – check your computer settings to find out if that’s possible for your devices. You can also try **F.lux**, **TrueDark** and **BarnerBrand**.

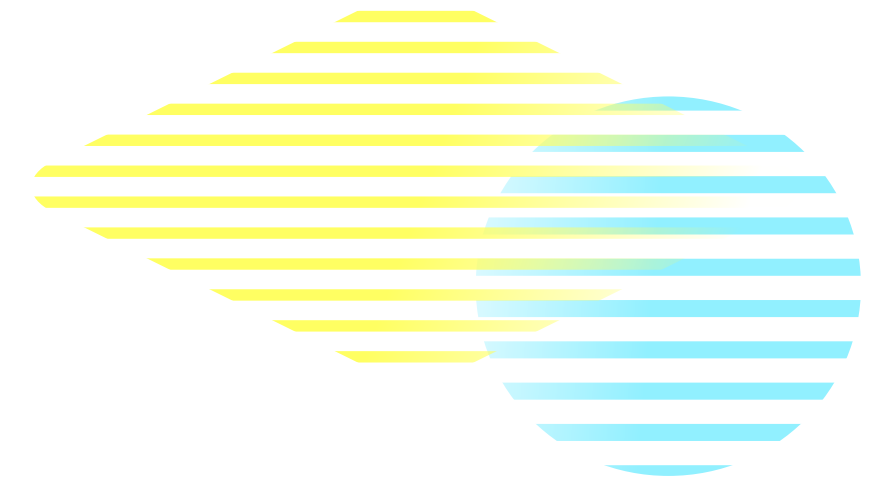


Even though we're all living more of our lives in virtual spaces, **our physical space and surroundings remain important to our mental wellbeing - especially during a time of lockdown.** To reinforce a sense of control and boundaries between personal and work lives, **assign certain areas of your home to be work- and non-work specific spaces** – and respect those designations.

It seems easy if you already have a dedicated office space within your home. However, if you don't, you can still assign a specific area in your home as a work-space:

Designate a specific seat at your kitchen table to work, and another one to eat

Assign the sofa as the space for family time regroup at the end of the day, and as the aperitif-zone if you want !



“Your immediate benefits”

Better mental effectiveness, because the brain processes memories not just on what you do, but also on the physical surroundings you're in

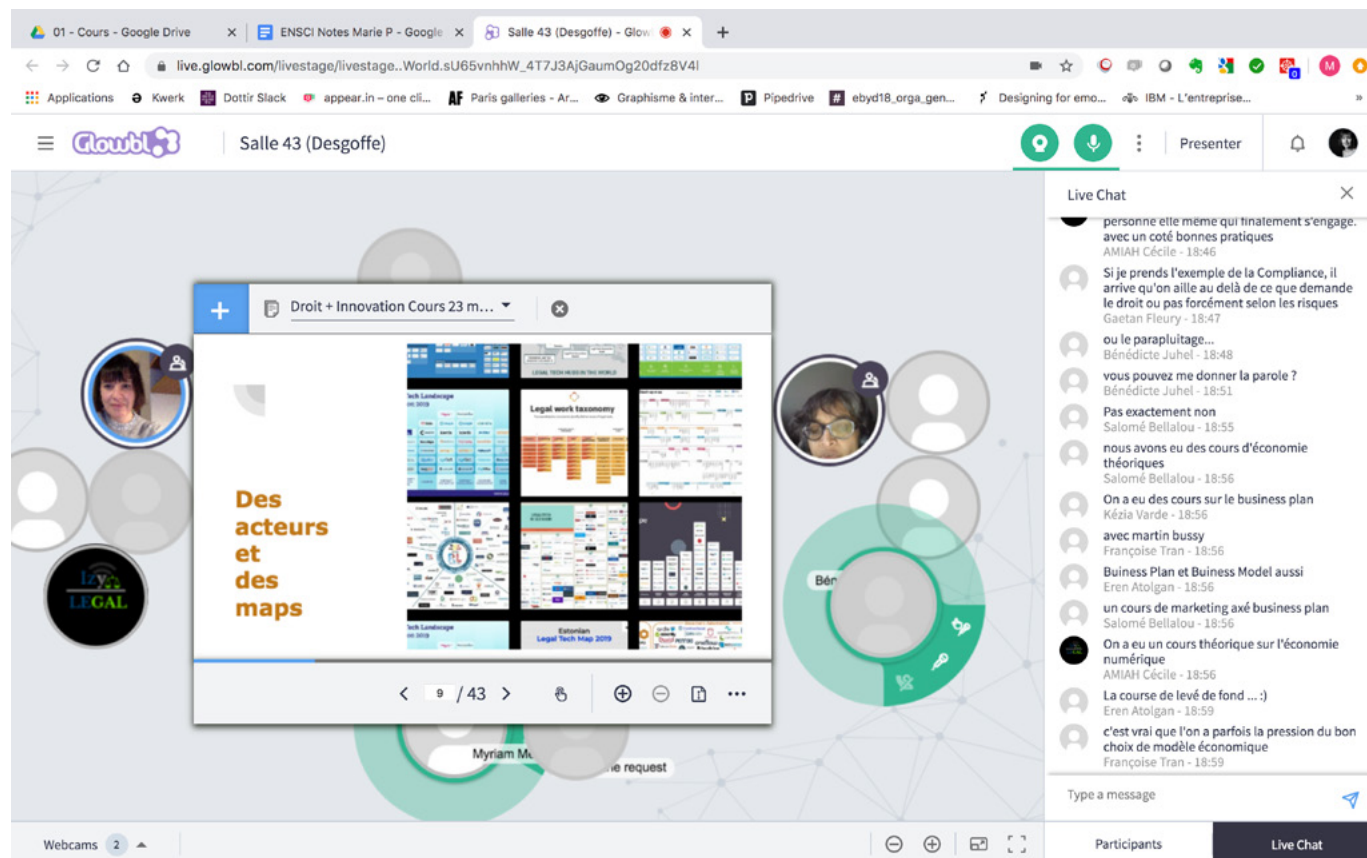
Your brain will be better placed to automatically switch into work mode, thus accessing work memories whenever you go to these places

Mental task of switching between work and home mode easier



“How can I keep contact with my team and continue to collaborate?”

No worries. There are now many **free videoconferencing tools**, offered during the crisis by Microsoft, Google, etc. **Zoom** also works well. The universities we teach at use **Glowbl**, which has a user-centric interface (and we prove it!).



At our agency, we regularly use **Mural**, an online co-creation tool to organize creative sessions with cool features such as colorful post-it notes, voting sessions, timer...And it's free for 3 months during the crisis. It's an easy, user-friendly way to keep teams connected, motivated and co-creating in a fun way.

With the increase of physical distancing between teams and customers, now more than ever is a time to actively reach out to hear what they're thinking and what they need. **Typeform** is an online questionnaire tool that we very regularly use to gather feedback from users when they cannot all participate to workshops. Teams includes a “Forms” option for surveys, as well as an area that includes a social-media style chat wall and collaborative document editing.

And Maddyness is super useful as always, they **list here** the good webinars to keep working, get inspiration and stay connected.

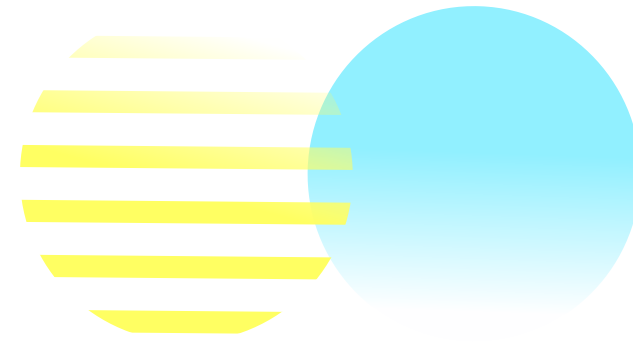
If you're a leader in your organisation and want to hear ideas on how to build effective, creative and engaged virtual teams, we'll be running free webinars on **www.amurabi.eu** to share ideas on how best to do that.

“Remote working? Easy! Except with kids at home!”

Hmm. Clearly, this is a tough one. More likely than not, you'll first feel like a bad parent, and a bad worker, and a bad human being trying to juggle between teaching your kids while zigzagging between conference calls and sharing the office with your better half (any resemblance to your situation...?).

You don't need to be a full-time teacher and professional!

Kids can learn up to a maximum of 4 hours a day – 8 hours of school a day is just to enable parents to go to work! Quite frankly, if you manage 2 solid hours every day, you're doing well! Make a realistic teaching plan with set hours for learning each day – treat teaching time and general family time in the same way as you would work meetings and schedule it in advance.

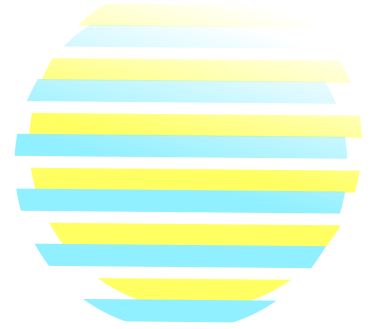


Second, you can pick **tons of great activities** from [this list](#) which compiles and updates the best ideas.

The most motivated could also run **a short design sprint** to [co-create a new family routine](#), asking your kids what they would need to be happy and calm. Co-creating an inclusive morning routine is a great way to start the day with a sense of positive togetherness (see more in the Wellbeing section below).

or [Just make silly videos](#)!

Use visual signals to show you really can't be disturbed. Help the people you live with (children and partners!) know when they can and can't disturb you using visual signals – for example, closing a door to the office space (if you have one), or putting on your headphones when you are not to be disturbed. Make sure you stick to the visual signals to help embed the behavior in those around you and remember to respect theirs!



“I just need some good news, once in a while”

Indeed. Some positive elements are simply indispensable.

The BBC listed **5 reasons to keep hope** in spite of recent events

The World Economic Forum shows how **collective intelligence is tackling the pandemic**, and creative an **action platform**

On another note, Alexandre Mesnais shares inspiring thoughts on how this crisis will help us all **grow and develop new skills**

@Tanksgoodnews and @Upworthy are two Instagram accounts that only post good news stories that warm the heart and restore faith in the world

“I need mental oxygen”

We all do! Anxiety is a natural human response to current world events. First, don't forget to breathe...

If you want to find the positive in today's new world try :

Meditation apps, for example **Headspace, Calm and Waking Up**. If you like the idea of meditating with others across the world, **Jay Shetty** live broadcasts meditations on Instagram/Facebook. His latest daily guided meditations have seen 30,000 people join from across the world to meditate together

Create a morning routine that works for you.

There are so many things that are uncertain and that we're not in control of right now, but your morning routine is something you can define for yourself. A good morning routine is the best way to start the day on a positive path.

If you have family, involve them in creating your new normal.

Activities you can share as a family to start off the day together can be as simple as eating breakfast together (something which, when we commute to work/school, we don't always take the time to do) or taking a morning 30 minute exercise/meditation class together).

Avoid activities like checking social media or watching tv, and instead focus on activities that involve social interaction and connections.

Visually post the morning routine you've created somewhere in your home will be a positive reminder of the part of your lives that you have control over

Start and end each work/school day sharing a positive thing you're going to / have achieved, and something that you're truly grateful for.

While you're thinking of / sharing these things, you're turning off the anxiety and fear responses in the brain, and activating the areas of the brain involved in rational planning and reward.

Automatically making you feel better and able to process things rationally.

Spread positivity and kindness – not only is an act of kindness inherently rewarding for our brains, **positive social acts** directly inspire **similar actions** in others.

Four key things to recharge us mentally and physically :

1

Meditation

(as above)

2

Learning

Inherently rewarding for the brain, see for example <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue> as well as [Free Online Ivy League Moocs](#), from “Introduction to Classical Music” by Yale University to “Introduction to Financial Accounting” by U Penn. In another style, have a go at [Baking from Home](#) tutorial on Instagram-live by a popular bakery in London. Celebrity chefs @christophe_michalak and @_jasonatherton post cooking videos on Instagram of food easy to cook during lockdown.

3

Exercise

Releases endorphins and brain factors that increase our capacity to learn. The world is quickly adapting to a mono-localised lifestyle and you can find a number of free exercise classes on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube. On Instagram @lestudioparis and @discobarre are both recent adopters of online streaming with classes specifically designed for those in lock-down.

4

Sleep

We're finding that sleep is both the [Marie Kondo](#) and dishwasher of the brain. When we sleep, the brain goes on **a cleaning cycle where special fluid clears out all the used (toxic) chemicals and resets the chemicals for optimal functioning the next day.** During certain phases of sleep, our brain also has a Marie Kondo moment – choosing to keep and move certain newly formed memories and experiences to better storage, and throw away other memories. While our brains haven't yet adopted the Marie Kondo approach to only keep memories that spark “joy”, it does use **the sleep cycle as a very effective nightly spring clean.** When you don't get a good night's sleep, you're essentially forcing your brain to add more mess to an already messy situation.



While the reality is that a lot of us won't be able to get the best quality / amount of sleep we want to over the coming months, there are things we can do to help make the sleep we do get the best we can have:

If possible, don't work during the day in your bedroom. Our brain uses information in our surroundings to support creation of new memories – if you use your bedroom to work during the day, then walking into the bedroom at night will reactivate work memories from the hours before

Meditating before bed helps reduce anxious thoughts and prepare the brain to reach the frequency it needs to sleep (yes meditation helps a number of different aspects of your life!)

If meditation isn't your thing but you have lots of thoughts fighting for attention before bedtime, writing **a 5 minute journal of the day's events, or counting 10 slow breaths, can help you calm your mind**

Avoid caffeine and high-sugar foods in the afternoon/evenings, as these will reduce the quality of sleep you will have. Also avoid high-intensity exercise within 2 hours before going to bed

Switch off all devices with screens at least 1 hour before bed - the blue light emitted from them interferes with our natural body clock. Try these blue light reduction solutions: **F.lux, TrueDark and BarnerBrand**

If possible, go to bed earlier rather than later. This is because the longer we stay awake into the evening, the more likely we are to be **forcing our bodies to raise our cortisol levels to keep us awake**. Cortisol is a long-acting hormone that inhibits sleep and takes time to be flushed out of our bodies

Make sure your bedroom isn't too hot and that you have good blinds/curtains to block out external light – both impact the quality of sleep we get

“I need my dose of arts and culture!”

Yes, we do believe that beauty will save the world! And the good news is that the world’s best museums offer virtual tours, Roman museums are available from your sofa here, The Met offers free opera podcasts.

An alternative to bingeing Netflix series is also to take the time to watch some great films!

The “Cinema du Réel”, a International Film festival due to take place in April did not cancel its event and rather made 13 movies available for free online.

For French & German speakers, Arte documentaries are particularly well-made and “ Les Bonnes Conditions ” gives a unique outlook on French teenagers as they follow them for over ten years of their lives, from high school to first jobs !

The Cinétek shared online a few classics and feel-good movies to watch over and over again – like “Singing in the rain”



When screens are getting a bit too much, we also try to take a break with just good music

Luckily, Laurent Garnier a world-famous DJ created a 7 hour long mix, for you to enjoy from your living room

You can also imagine you were outdoors by listening to white noise of your choice on Noisly: background noises from a café, birds chirping outside or even the sound of the ocean...



“I want to help!”

Yayy! That’s the spirit. There are many ways to help, even during lockdown :

Legal innovation pioneer Cat Moon (Vanderbilt University) has created a database of legal innovators who bring experience, expertise, and energy to the current coronavirus crisis, you can join here: <https://www.makelawbetter.org/>

Quebec’s Ministry of Justice launched a [Legal Clinic](#) to answer all citizens’ questions on Covid-19, thanks to the existing network of free legal aid. All qualified lawyers are welcome to join the national help squad !

In France, the CNB launched a solidarity initiative in which voluntary lawyers will answers citizens’ and companies’ questions in a 30mn telephone call. All lawyers registered on www.avocats.fr can participate.

The French government is also calling all citizens willing to help, in any area, to register [here](#) to get into action !

We’ll update and improve this guide as the situation evolves. Please don’t hesitate to get in touch to share more advice, ideas, useful links. We’ll add them and share on !