

Tips for dealing with the corona quarantine

winter semester
2020/2021

The 2020/2021 winter semester is off to a start and it's clear things won't be going back to normal, the way they were pre-corona, any time soon. Life on the JGU campus is different. The more we learn about the virus, the more our circumstances change, meaning we have to constantly reset and reorient ourselves. More and more students are feeling the "corona fatigue", getting frustrated, and having trouble staying motivated. However, it's more important than ever, especially now during the cold, dark winter months, to actively think about what steps you can take to keep your mental health intact during the winter semester. You've probably come across similar lists detailing various tips and may even have doubts about whether or not they even work. And let's be realistic. We are aware that a few tips are not going to fix everything. But it is important to make the best out of the current situation. Staying active will also make you feel less helpless. This is why we updated our information sheet "Tips for dealing with the corona quarantine" from the 2020 summer semester, and added further tips, such as dealing with procrastination. Keep your chin up!

1. Helpful links with general information from JGU

- JGU's main page for dealing with the corona pandemic and offering up-to-date information can be found [here](#).
- First-year students can find special tips [here](#).
- Information on financial support can be found [here](#).
- The JGU has developed an online course with many tips and information on "How to study online". You can take part [here](#).

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- Students lacking the IT equipment or set-up necessary to participate in the university's digital events can contact the Equality and Diversity Office by e-mail at diversitaet@uni-mainz.de.
- The student councils for the different [faculties](#), as well as the [AStA](#) also have information available for students and first-years.

2. General Information

You are not alone

- It's perfectly normal to be worried and anxious during the current situation, and it can be helpful to talk about it with someone else (a telephone helpline is available 24/7, free of charge, at 0800/111 0 111 or 0800/111 0 222. Please also note that the counseling service is in German).
- Remember: this is an unusual situation and the precautions are very important. Even if it doesn't feel like it right now, it's temporary and things will probably be different next winter.
- At the start of the pandemic did you enthusiastically clean the house and organize online-meetings with friends, but now just find the topic increasingly exhausting and frustrating? You aren't the only one. Show yourself a little understanding. You may need more time to complete certain tasks and might be less motivated to start new projects.

Structure is important

- Keep the same routine and daily schedule you had before. If this isn't possible, make a new one. A weekly planner or calendar can be helpful.

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- Always get up and go to bed at the same time. Eat regular, healthy, and balanced meals. Drink plenty of fluids.
- Even if it's tempting, don't spend all day in your pyjamas or sweatpants. Get dressed in the mornings as though you are going to class or to work.
- Be able to differentiate between the days of the week (e.g. Thursdays are "pizza nights", Fridays are "movie nights" etc.) so as not to fall into the "daily grind".
- Set a daily goal for yourself, i.e. listen to lecture xyz or go for a walk with a friend.
- If you are doing home office, take your breaks at the same time you would normally take them at work. Spend your lunch breaks with your colleagues via video chat or go for a walk around the block. Make sure to clearly separate your work and free time.

Dealing with Procrastination

- Analyse your procrastination habits. Different steps are necessary depending on the cause. For example, if you have trouble motivating yourself to watch lectures online, then plan to reward yourself after successfully completing the task (i.e. a piece of cake or a coffee from your favourite café).
- An organized daily structure and good time management help you complete your tasks. This includes setting priorities, breaking down big goals into smaller ones, and planning for buffers and enough breaks.
- "A sorrow shared is a sorrow halved". Plan to meet online for lectures or to study with your fellow students to help stay motivated.
- Try to increase motivation by developing an interest in what you are learning. Imagine how you can use it later on in your career or in your current day-to-day.
- Open questions and uncertainties can encourage procrastination. Ask your fellow students or lecturers for help.

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- Set up your study and workspace in such a way that you have as few distractions as possible. Your cell phone especially is best left in the other room.
- Form coaching teams with fellow students to support each other emotionally and practically. Regularly exchange ideas on fixed dates, and discuss (learning) goals and evaluate how they are progressing.

Stay active and healthy

- In the cold winter months it is even more important to keep movement, sports, and fresh air in mind (regularly air out your room or apartment). This is proven to have a positive effect on your mood.
- Get enough sleep.
- Avoid consuming excessive amounts of alcohol, drugs, or medication.
- Plan positive and enjoyable daily activities. Make sure to have a good work/life balance.
- Do not binge on Netflix, YouTube & Co. Distinguish between the content that is actually good for you and the content you are just passively consuming.

Stay in touch with friends, but set boundaries

- Continue to stay in touch with friends, acquaintances, family, and neighbours through social media, or agree to meet up for a socially-distanced walk with a hot drink.
- It may seem a little strange at first to make new friends online during your studies. After all, it's easier and requires less commitment to simply turn to chat with your neighbour in a seminar than to send a message over the online seminar's chat function. But remember; you are not alone here either. Everyone else is probably experiencing the same thing. And your fellow students might be pleased that you were brave enough to take the initial step.

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- If you live with others, create spaces where you can be alone, and address conflicts as they arise.
- The various ways in which the corona guidelines can be implemented could lead to conflicts within your shared flat, family, or friend group. Figure out what suits you best and communicate this to the people in your social circles. But you should also show understanding if those in your environment decide to do things differently than you.

Reliable information

- Inform yourself about the corona pandemic through reliable serious sources (e.g. the Robert Koch Institute, the World Health Organization, or the Federal Ministry of Health).
- Limit the amount of time you spend looking at/reading the news (e.g. only two times a day). This helps against worrying and low spirits.

3. Ideas for activities at home (most are doable with others via video chat)

The constant restrictions can lead to feelings of frustration and passivity. During uncertain times, it is even more important to actively structure your life. Draw up a list of all the things you would like to do this winter (in keeping with the prescribed restrictions). Hang it up in a clearly visible spot in your flat or room. Here you will find some ideas for activities you can do at home, either alone or with friends.

- read (you can borrow books over the public library's e-lending platform)
- start a book or film club

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- buy and read a nice book
- write poems/stories and/or keep a journal
- keep a positivity journal (every night make a note of something positive you experienced or a personal success)
- listen to audio books/podcasts
- watch TV series, movies, documentaries, musicals, or concerts online (currently many live streams or recordings are being offered free of charge. You can find some compilations [here](#) and [here](#))
- watch a play online (e.g. [here](#))
- make an online visit to a museum or gallery (e.g. [here](#) or [here](#))
- record podcasts/read poems out loud for others
- play video games
- keep a sense of humour, i.e. telling jokes, watching comedies
- bake and cook for yourself or others (i.e. try out new or difficult recipes)
- try dishes that you have never had before (i.e. experiment with Asian recipes)
- plan to meet up with friends over phone or video chat to eat or have a cup of coffee together
- get creative within your friend group: for example, every Tuesday, everyone makes the same meal according to the same recipe and sends each other photos; movie night with the appropriate meal, i.e. the Godfather with pasta
- try out a new diet, e.g. one week plant-based
- surprise friends and family with letters, postcards, and emails
- phone/video chat
- clear out/organize your closet, desk, cell phone, or laptop
- clear out the basement
- clean
- complete the tasks which have been at the top of your to-do list for a while

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- organize photos (e.g. “best of’s” from your last vacation) or compile and gift a photo album
- learn something new (a language, a type of sport, meditation, programming...) over YouTube, for example
- start that hobby that you have been putting off
- get some reading done for university (many publishers offer their journals and e-books free of charge for a limited time [here](#) and [here](#))
- research internship opportunities
- dance around your flat (you can find a compilation of various concerts and DJ performances [here](#))
- crafts, painting, knitting, crocheting, sewing, DIYs – for yourself or friends and family
- collect colourful fall leaves and make greeting cards
- prepare gifts
- daydream
- listen and sing along to your favourite songs
- listen to music/make music (e.g. play an instrument by an open window)
- learn/practice to play an instrument
- do puzzles, sudokus etc.
- relaxation, mindfulness, and yoga exercises
- think about your own values and goals
- clean and/or rearrange your room
- go for walks
- go for a torch-lit walk (“Fackel-Wanderung”)
- get out in nature on your own or with your flat
- see if volunteers are needed (e.g. to sew and donate protective masks)

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- hang notes with hangman, tic-tac-toe, short messages etc. up in your windows and challenge your neighbours to a game
- offer help and support to others, especially those who belong to at-risk groups (older neighbours, acquaintances)
- test out perfumes, deodorants, shower gels
- self-care: take a bath, paint your nails, do a face or hair mask, do a spa-night
- try a new look/hairstyle
- upcycle (e.g. an article of clothing)
- be silly for a day (e.g. opposite day, etc.)
- do puzzles
- exercise (this is possible indoors with help from YouTube. Many studios also offer live streams of their classes)
- arrange to do home workouts over video chat with friends; one person leads and the others follow
- plan your next vacation
- throw on warm clothes and soak up some sun on the balcony or at a window
- wrap yourself up in a sleeping bag on the balcony with tea
- meet up with a friend at the Rhine with a thermos of tea
- have a winter BBQ in the garden or on the balcony
- go for a walk with a hot beverage
- plant flowers or vegetables; challenge: planting seeds from fruits you have at home (avocado, grapefruits, lemon, apple, mango ...)
- make a forest biotope
- start a herb garden on your window sill
- play charades with friends via messaging services
- write a letter to yourself to open on a special occasion (e.g. graduation) or after a certain period of time (in half a year); write e-mails to your future self

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- make/bake/cook Christmas gifts
- make and send (Christmas) cards
- get cozy and have a (Christmas) movie marathon
- organize a pub quiz with friends
- do crafts with others and learn from them (i.e. pumpkin carving, making an Advent wreath/calendar, baking cookies)
- start groups based on your interests (i.e. plants, music, books)
- make fridge magnets from modelling clay
- use stuff up
- forest bathing
- photography
- make a campfire
- organize a digital game night
- make others happy
- decorate the flat
- light some candles and spritz them with an orange peel
- ice skating
- build a snowman/igloo
- gather chestnuts
- geocaching
- karaoke
- put together a surprise parcel for a friend and have them open it during a skype date
- play an online exit game

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4. If you are suffering from serious mental health issues

In the current situation, many people are concerned about their own health, the health of their family and friends, finances, the future etc. In the long run, this can lead to an increase in depressive moods, fears, and other psychological problems. If you were already suffering from mental health issues before the outbreak of corona, its subsequent restrictions could lead to a worsening of your symptoms. If you think our tips are not sufficiently helpful, you may need professional support.

The Mental Health Services' Offers for JGU Students

- During the nationwide contact restrictions you as a JGU student are eligible to receive help from the Mental Health Services. We will continue to support you by [phone and video chat](#).
- Since November 11, 2020, the mentally healthy Services has been offering the course "Mental gesund trotz Corona" (Mental Health despite Corona). You can find more information [here](#) (please note that this course is in German).
- All of the courses offered by the Mental Health Services are currently taking place online. You can find information on the topics and times [here](#)
- You can find many tips for common mental health issues among students (i.e. depressive moods, worrying, sleep disorders) [here](#).
- Currently, JGU students also have free access to the Mental Health Services' online services with helpful tips and exercises on „Planning projects“, „Change your thoughts“, „Improving sleep“, and „Coping with stress“ [here](#).
- In order to have a greater peace of mind during your studies, you can find tips, videos, audio clips, and exercises on various topics (e.g. "Being well organized", "Improving your self-esteem", and "A more relaxed study experience") at www.me-at-jgu.de (please note that the counseling service is in German).

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Psychotherapeutic and/or psychiatric treatment

If you are currently in psychotherapeutic and/or psychiatric treatment, you should be aware of the following:

- You can continue to visit psychotherapeutic practices and psychiatrists. These visits fall under the regulations concerning doctor's visits and are considered a "necessary medical service". Many practices are offering video consultations.
- If you have been prescribed medication, continue to take it. Discuss any changes with your doctor.
- If you notice a worsening of your symptoms due to the current situation or due to other reasons, please contact your doctor or family doctor. In urgent cases you should contact your local psychiatric clinic (for Mainz: Untere Zahlbacher Str. 8, 06131/172920).