



Work Quarantine: what to expect and how to prepare

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Since most governments have started easing lockdown regulations and made the provision for domestic and international business travel, you may find yourself required to undergo quarantine in a specified facility such as a hotel in the near future. In an attempt to prevent the unknown transmission of the Coronavirus, quarantine is the restriction of movement of people who have potentially been exposed to the disease.

To be well prepared it is good to know what to expect: The recommended duration of quarantine is 14 days from the time of entry, after which if no symptoms are exhibited, permission to enter and engage with the community is granted. However, the circumstances and duration for which you may be required to undergo quarantine may differ significantly depending on the company you work for, the facility provided and the country you are in. Despite these differences some of the aspects of quarantine you may be faced with include:

- **Lack of fresh air:** Whilst there should be sufficient ventilation, you may be confined to a room where you might not be able to open the windows. Air conditioning might be turned off to prevent the risk of infection.
- **Little room to exercise:** Being confined to a small space may make moving around for exercise challenging.
- **Delivered precooked meals:** Depending on the quarantine facility used, meals might be dropped off and collected from your room door.
- **Lack of cleaning services:** In order to protect cleaning staff, you may be required to clean your room for the duration of your quarantine.
- **Strictly monitored confinement to a room:** During quarantine you can expect to be strictly confined to a closed space, which you will not be permitted to leave until your period of quarantine is complete.
- **In some places limited internet access:** Some countries have restricted access to the internet and in some facilities the internet speed is very slow.



What can I expect from a psychological perspective? Unfortunately, many who have gone through quarantine say it is an unpleasant experience mainly due to the loss of freedom and loss of regular routine. During your period of mandatory quarantine, you may experience feelings of **boredom, frustration, irritable mood, loneliness, isolation, stress, anxiety, fear** and **anger**. Please note these are normal reactions to a very abnormal situation and usually fade away shortly after the quarantine period is over. Be prepared for these reactions to affect you but also be assured that they are unlikely to last.

How do I prepare for quarantine? Whilst we can appreciate the reason behind quarantine, it is a difficult pill to swallow. Here are some tips that can help you prepare for this experience:

1. **Remember the bigger picture:** Since the purpose of quarantine is to prevent the unknown transmission of the virus, by complying you are keeping others safe, and possibly saving lives. It is also important to remember that although the days may feel long, the experience will not last forever. Perhaps create a “quarantine calendar” for yourself, where you can cross off the days until you are free!
2. **Remain calm and remember the facts:** Often regulators will request you to advise them if you experience Coronavirus symptoms. If you do happen to experience some of the symptoms, report it to the authorities, but remain calm. Remember only a positive test result provides absolute confirmation of COVID-19.
3. **Pack a “goody” bag:** Consider packing a few items to keep yourself entertained and comforted. Keep your mind active by packing a few books you have been meaning to read, downloading movies/series on your laptop, downloading single-player computer games or registering for an online course (possibly for free!). Also consider taking some comfort foods/snacks such as your favourite chocolate, nuts or crisps to snack on from time to time. A treat can thoroughly be enjoyed in moderation.
4. **Pack your basic essentials:** Ensure you have a sufficient supply of your personal hygiene items, as well as any chronic medication you require. Ensure you also pack enough comfortable clothes to wear during the quarantine period.

5. **Maintain regular communication & social support:** Make use of your social support network and have regular calls with those you love. Try speak to friends and family who will lift your mood, make you laugh or provide encouragement and support. Ensure you are registered with and familiar with the social platforms you plan to use, when in doubt ask your teenagers or a youngster to help you out!
6. **Eat healthy:** As far as you can, try maintain a healthy diet and eat foods that nourish your body and provide energy. Whilst comfort foods such as pizza, burgers and pastas may be tempting, try keep these to a minimum as they may leave you feeling bloated and sluggish over time.
7. **Establish a daily routine:** Try to maintain a regular sleeping pattern by going to bed and waking up at the same time each day. Also try to exercise for at least 15 minutes a day. There are apps you can download on your phone for free which have indoor exercises that can be done in a confined space. Also consider packing a yoga mat, resistance bands or other compact exercise equipment. Although initial motivation to exercise may be challenging, once you get going you will find yourself feeling better as exercise releases “happy/feel good” hormones.
8. **Prepare for things you would like to do under these conditions:** If you enjoy reading, or journaling take books/kindle or a journal with you. If you are creative, pack your handicraft tools and material if possible. Ensure you are able to do something you thoroughly enjoy by preparing for and doing it. It will make the time pass by quicker and quarantine life so much easier.
9. **Contact your company for additional information:** Try find out as much information on the facility in which you will be undergoing quarantine and prepare accordingly. Ask questions regarding internet connectivity, the available room appliances, what to expect regarding meals for example; this will give you a good idea of what to expect and how to best prepare.

Lastly, in the event that quarantine brings up overwhelming feelings of anxiety, fear and frustration please reach out to MAYDAY-SA: +27-12-333-6000 and ask for Mayday, or send an email to maydaysouthafrica@gmail.com or alternatively contact a skilled professional who can provide assistance.

References:

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