

# Self-Isolation from a Physiotherapist's Perspective

## in Rural Manitoba

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I never thought I'd be asked to share my experiences of life in self-isolation. However, given the current climate, it seemed more than appropriate. After all, if ever there was an exercise in self-responsibility for one's health, coping with COVID-19 is it.

When this pandemic began to emerge in Canada, daily life as we knew it changed. The world changed. Unimaginable tragedies began to emerge just as I was returning from a family vacation in Mexico.

Of course, the ask was that I self-isolate for two weeks. No problem, I thought. Compared to other parts of the world, isolation in a rural setting did not seem so bad; and even though this was uncharted territory, I felt confident I could adapt as an individual, and as a physiotherapist.

What I discovered however was excess free time, and no patients.

Consequently, I had always lived and practiced by the philosophy that, 'action is empowerment.' Especially with my patients and in times of heightened stress and fear caused by a lack of control. 'Control what you can and let go of what you can't,' would become my motto.

Without realizing it, these same principles of physiotherapy management would now hold true for life in general. In fact, self-isolation can be managed in much the same way we manage a sudden injury. We assess the situation, formulate a plan and execute using available resources.

Here's a glimpse of my 'rehab' plan.

I joined an online Joga workout routine to keep fit; this was new, and it suited me personally and professionally.

Brisk outside walking was my aerobic conditioning that allowed me to get essential Vitamin D and to get out of the house!

Spring cleaning, closet painting and reorganization were purposeful functional tasks.

Work related computer training and crossword puzzles actively challenged my mind.

Reading for fun and Joga breathing exercises helped with relaxation.

Intentionally I maintained my normal sleep routine to ensure adequate and important restorative sleep but added the occasional nap.

The Internet was useful in maintaining contact with family and friends as well as accessing updated Covid-19 information.

I enjoyed online music concerts (yay Garth Brooks!) and tried new healthier recipes.

Family time included impromptu chats and dancing, playtime with the horses, housework, home videos, movie night, and lots of laughter – which really recharges your battery.

Varying my activities made them more enjoyable as did pacing and planning, which prevented injury by not overdoing tasks and by alternating sedentary and active working postures. I found satisfaction in activities with tangible outcomes, no matter how menial they were. And at the end of the day, I finished with a sense of accomplishment.

Self-isolation differs for each person. If your plan addresses physical and mental health, and promotes a healthy lifestyle, you will have successfully completed your rehab. By caring for our own health, we help others to take care of theirs. Here's hoping, when this is all over, we can apply our COVID insights into a new normal way of being with greater enthusiasm and gratitude.

As my isolation ends today, I find myself with no patients to see as my, and many other clinics are closed for the foreseeable future as we do our part to mitigate the risk and prevent the spread. While I certainly miss my patients and can't wait to get back to work, I know this is an important part of the process. When the world is back to a new normal, I will be ready to make a positive impact in post-isolation lives. In the meantime, stay hopeful and healthy!

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