

TIPS

FROM [THE] INSIDE:

COVID-19 has forced many people to self-isolate and quarantine. Many adults, kids and teens are really struggling as we're cut off from people and things that are important to us. Even as some states begin slowly to open up, the reality that we will all be practicing physical distancing and other measures for some time to come is beginning to sink in.

With so many people struggling, we all want to be helpful. So four of us are sharing our experience coping when you don't have a lot of control over who you can and can't see and when you can't leave a small area. We have put together tips on:

- how to not lose your cool when folks make you angry or are getting on your nerves.
- what to do when you're missing the people you love and care about the most.
- what opportunities can be found in moments like these.

What many have experienced in the last several weeks is the tiniest taste of the dehumanizing effect of mass incarceration on individuals, communities and our country. We were four of the over two million human beings behind bars on any given day in the United States. As you can see from our bios, it doesn't define us. At the same time, we do have insights to share that are relevant, precisely because we are all human and these are hard times. The inconvenience, stress, and disruption of stay-at-home orders is not prison, but the tips — some small things, some profound — apply across settings.

As you read these tips and try them out, think about two things:

1. **How have quarantine and isolation affected you? Now imagine you're not at home, you don't have access to technology or much contact with people you love. That you're even more restricted than you are now and can't go for a walk or a car ride. That the rules change all the time. That it's years and decades, not weeks. Would that be a recipe for treatment, rehabilitation or change?**
2. **If you made a tip sheet from your experience how different would it be? Prison and quarantine are really different. But people are people, and we are all more alike than we are different.**

COVID-19 has challenged everyone's assumptions about how the world works. We invite you to re-examine your perceptions about people who are or have been incarcerated—people like us. People. And then get involved.

Authors: **April G., Niki M., Choy P., Ruben W. with the Full Frame Initiative and Re:Store Justice.**



How do you **not** lose your cool if folks are making you angry or getting on your nerves?

- Remove yourself from any situation or space that is causing you anxiety if possible.
- Put headphones on and listen to music.
- Exercise. It's a way to retreat and be by yourself.
- Create a space where you can be alone even if it's just hanging up a sheet to separate you from others. People know when they see the sheet that you need alone time.
- Find a ritual that helps you like showering as a form of cleansing.
- Write something. Creative writing can keep you calm and not concerned about things you don't have any control over.
- Connect with something spiritual like church, meditation or yoga
- Try to reign in your energy. Breathe deeply. Slow down.
- Read books as a way to temporarily escape your current surroundings and current environment.
- Try things that will change your mood like thinking about what you are grateful for.

"It's all about finding some control over what your daily activities are. I woke up each day with a plan, some days it goes unaltered, some days you need to change."

— Ruben W.



How do you cope with missing people you love or worrying about people you can't check on?

- Write something to the ones you miss like a poem, a joke, a few lines about something only you and your loved one remember. Send it out or even keep it for yourself to look back on.
- Write letters to connect with those you love.
- If you can, call your family and friends.
- Make genuine connections with the people around you. Hear people's stories and experiences, share your own stories. That's what connects us.

"We all crave that physical contact, a hug, a handshake, or just the presence of someone we love. It is hard [to be separated], but doable."

—Niki M.



How do you keep things light or have fun?

- Remember to laugh and find the humor in things.
- Play cards or games.
- Watch a comedy tv show.
- Share music and movies together.
- Turn down the volume on the tv and make up your own lines for the actors on the screen. Whatever scene is taking place, improvise your own made up scripts.
- Laugh at yourself and joke around with others.
- Cook and share food together.
- Be creative and come up with your own games and skits to act out.
- Share funny stories and moments with each other.

"I personally laugh at myself when I do something silly or absent-minded. I find humor in that. I use that as a tool to remind myself I am human."

—April G.



Are there any opportunities in isolation or quarantine/shelter in place that you think people should think about?

- This is a great time to do a lot of self-reflection. Sit down and ask yourself - what can I do to make my situation better, to make myself better? And what's going to bring me the most joy in these circumstances?
- This time can be what you make of it. It is a moment to recharge the soul, reground the mind and refocus your passion.
- Use this time to discover what you truly like and dislike. This is an opportunity to hone in on your talents, strengths and weaknesses.
- Create a board where you post questions/thoughts. Use it as a tool to break down your goals into doable steps.

"Make the most of the time. Time to reflect on – am I content with who I am at this moment and my intentions on becoming anything other than what I am. And that begins when you surround yourself with people who think differently."

—Ruben W.



Are there ways to find a sense of "freedom" or some control and choice when so much is being decided by other people?

- Don't allow others to have power over you. You control how you react, respond and feel.
- Create and maintain balance.
- Set a routine or a schedule.
- Find a sense of autonomy. Decide that your mind is free.
- Continue to learn and grow. Educating yourself is freedom.
- Change how you see a situation by seeing what you're grateful for and telling yourself something different.

"My mind was free before my physical body walked through the prison gate. My mind was free from negative self-talks, free from toxic energy, and free from the labels attributed to me--inmate, convict, felon, etc."

—Choy P.



What are other tips to help people get through these times?

- Keep yourself busy by doing positive things.
- No matter where you are, you have the opportunity to be the best version of yourself, learn about yourself, grow into yourself.
- Be kind and willing to help people.
- Do not allow the environment around you to push you into becoming someone you are not.
- Respect those around you.
- Allow yourself to be open to the possibility of growing mentally, spiritually and/or physically.
- Be open to other perspectives.
- Share with others. Take what you need, leave enough for others.
- What [a quarantine/isolation type setting] offers is time. Time to think about what must be done and how to go about doing it.

AUTHOR BIOS

Choy P.

Having a growth mindset has allowed Choy to not only fully grasp opportunities that come his way, but also to learn from all the different situations he's been in and the people he has met. A California native, Choy now makes his home in the Bay Area, a place he loves for all that it has to offer. The local community welcomed him with open arms and in turn, Choy gives back in so many ways. "Success," he says, "is adding value to people's lives." And so that is what Choy does every day. He aims to bridge the divide between tech and advocacy work, drawing on his strengths in coding and design to help others and to solve big problems. As a housing navigator at an emergency shelter, he connects people to resources and helps them to obtain important documents necessary to navigate the social service system. But he also listens. Sharing stories, exercising compassion and making genuine connections with people are central to Choy's ethos. And when people feel as though their voices fall upon deaf ears, Choy is their megaphone — amplifying the voices of oppressed people, unafraid to say what others feel they cannot. A caring brother and son, loyal friend and fierce advocate, Choy finds joy in everyday moments shared in laughter and appreciation for one another. When not hard at work, Choy can be found practicing the hula and enjoying time spent with his friends and family.

April G.

Disciplined and determined, when April sets her mind to something, she does it with her whole self. A doer in every sense of the word, she splits her time between two jobs and multiple projects, often working long days and evenings. She organizes, advocates and gets involved in public policy. She is a coordinator for the State of California through the Young Women's Freedom Center for the Sister Warrior Freedom Coalition. A pace many would find exhausting is energizing for April. She truly lives to help her community and to fight for the rights of others: women who are incarcerated, women who are being trafficked, marginalized women of color, criminalized girls of color. She shows up for those who cannot. April describes herself as two sides of the same coin - an introvert and an extrovert at the same time. A person who can be loud, while also being quiet. Confident, while being mindful of others. Authentic and generous. Someone who has so much color hidden on the inside just waiting to come out. A unicorn. She is unafraid to say what needs to be said and to speak truth to power — these characteristics make April a true leader. She feels that she has so much to give and is always seeking out new information, new connections, and new ways to accomplish her goals. When not busy saving the world, April can be found trying out new meditation techniques or riding her motorcycle around and beyond her home in Sacramento, CA.

Niki M.

Niki exudes energy, positivity and heart. If freedom is the power to control one's own attitude, then Niki is truly free. Having undergone a lot of deep self-exploration and healing, she now embraces life in all its complexity and is completely comfortable in her own skin. She has mastered practices that allow her to stay calm, happy and productive no matter what is happening around her. Resilient and determined, Niki chooses to live a life aligned with compassion and in the service of others. An accomplished group leader and facilitator, she has led and co-founded organizations, and is certified in denial management and drug and alcohol counseling. Niki is currently a college student, juggling remote classes and homework as she works to complete her bachelor's degree, but no amount of education can come close to the life experience and self-learning that she has already undergone. Niki is an advocate and mentor for youth involved in the juvenile justice system and people who are incarcerated. She participates in the Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition and teaches restorative justice practices; she does community organizing to give voice and hope to others. Niki brings her best self to everything she does and is filled with gratitude for the people who have stood by her. She finds joy in the things others often take for granted — the smell of asphalt, browsing through stores, an aimless drive, a bike ride on a sunny day, her family and her chosen family. At the end of the day, you might find Niki on the Coronado Bridge or the top of Mount Helix reflecting, and taking in the stunning views of San Diego, CA.

Ruben W.

Always curious, Ruben is an intellectual at heart, a leader, a life-long learner and a storyteller. He prefers to surround himself with people who think differently than he does; it allows him the opportunity to stretch his mind and gain new perspectives. A sincere and gregarious soul, Ruben is the type of person who can find common ground with anyone who crosses his path. Somehow, he even finds a way to make political debates light and fun. Ruben has a way of bringing out the best in others. That's why the role of mentor fits him so well. He is passionate about his work, particularly his involvement with California Prison Focus, and has never been afraid to utilize his voice and his body in the fight for justice. Information is an important tool, and Ruben's life's work is to make sure that others have access to information that can help them to make better decisions in life. The numerous certificates and awards that he has received over the years are a testament to his success as mentor and advocate, but Ruben has no intention of slowing down. Joy is found in giving back and Ruben truly lives each day for others. Born in Louisiana, he grew up in Compton, CA and now calls Oakland home. Never wanting to sit still, Ruben can always be found working, writing, playing chess on a homemade board, or fishing for stripers in the Bay. Though he doesn't gamble, he's always up for a game of Texas hold 'em and he is always looking forward to a phone call or visit with his beloved sister.

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To learn more about extreme sentencing and innovations in justice reform, visit recaljustice.org;

To learn more about how shifting systems to center on what makes us more alike than different improves long-term outcomes, lives and communities, visit fullframeinitiative.org.



The Full Frame Initiative (FFI) is a social justice organization that believes everyone deserves a fair shot at wellbeing—the set of universal needs and experiences essential in balance and combination, to weather challenges and have health and hope. We work with pioneering government agencies and systems, non

profit organizations, and communities across the country to demonstrate the power of fundamentally shifting our country's focus from short-term fixes to fostering long-term wellbeing. Together, we are creating possibilities for lasting change in people's lives and sparking a broader movement that replaces poverty, violence, trauma and oppression with wellbeing and justice.



Re:Store Justice recognizes that basic dignity and equal rights for all is the foundation to freedom, justice, and peace in the world. We envision a fair justice system – one guided by the principles of re:storative justice – that empowers directly impacted individuals to share their lived experiences to drive meaningful change from the inside-out. In working together to better understand each other, we believe in healing traumas, finding lasting solutions to crime, and building safer, healthier, and more equitable communities.