

“The ten tips from an enclosed nun to live through the confinement and stay sane”

Based on the advice by Sister Maria Teresa de los Angeles¹

1. Embrace this new situation from a place of freedom. We choose to stay at home freely for the greater good, and not just because we've been forced to do it. In doing so, we also find a deeper freedom, an inner freedom that no one can take from us. This is about our mental attitude.

2. Search for an inner peace that will enlarge your soul. In other words, look inside yourself for inner resources, for peace and creativity that you didn't know were there before because we live lives that are too busy to allow those things to flourish from inside out.

3. Take time to know yourself. Pay attention to your inner movements and moods, and how you respond to pressure, affirmation, encouragement, or broken expectations. Do not let fear, or sadness, or pessimism take the best of you. Instead, when a particular thought is not life-giving, get rid of it. Instead, try to hold onto those things that give you peace, joy and life. Remind yourself of the bigger picture and that this too will pass. Consider the words of Teresa of Avila wrote: Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you, everything will pass, only God remains, only God suffices.

4. Practice kindness, patience, love and self-control with those you share your space with. The great test of these times of confinement is how we live with others without treading on each other's feet or getting into each other's nerves. At times like this we all become more touchy, maybe more irritable. Be aware of this, and try to share your space with generosity, don't be hard on others or on yourself. Don't get too worked up about petty things. Live and let those around you live.

5. Use your time wisely. This is one of the most important tips for those not able to work. Given the lack of structure, try and create a daily plan that works for you in your own family context, to give you a sense of rhythm and purpose. This can include time for activities, for being creative, for cooking – maybe even try slow cooking –, time for eating, for exercising, even time for leisure.

6. Expand your horizons. A few weeks ago we used to complain that we had no time to do the things we really wanted: to catch up with reading, or to do an online course, or to listen to music... Maybe this time is a gift to help you enlarge your music taste by listening to new artists, or to help you learn new skills, or simply to stimulate your mind by learning about other countries, maybe an exotic country you've always wanted to visit. Plan that journey, even if you don't ever go. Or try something new in your own spiritual journey, maybe follow the liturgy of the hours, or have a quiet day at home...

¹ <https://carmelitasdescalzascadiz.wordpress.com/2020/03/17/10-consejos-de-una-monja-de-clausura-para-vivir-los-dias-de-confinamiento-y-no-morir-en-el-intento/>

7. If you are particularly sensitive, try to avoid listening to the news all the time, especially now that all news seem overwhelmingly bad news, and avoid having conversations which enter into a negative spiral. Do not spend too much time in front of a screen – we tend to think about teenagers as suffering from *screenitis* or addiction to their mobile phones, tablets or computers. But sometimes, we adults can fall into the same pattern. Instead, try and play some happy music, even when you're cooking, and let your body move with it... even if you make a fool of yourself, dancing is a deeply healing activity.

8. You are not isolated. You may be on your own, but you are not alone. Our friends and families may not be physically with us, but we can stay in touch with them in many different ways: picking up the phone, or face-timing or whatsapp video calling, through social media. We may also find time to sit down and write an old fashion letter to someone who's been on our hearts recently. If you live with others, try to communicate practicing the skill of intentional listening; that is, being fully present to them, and paying attention both to their words and to their mood and body language. Know that you are connected with others, and also with God. You are not alone.

9. Take time to reflect and connect with God. Within your daily rhythm, make sure to include a bit of time to reflect and meditate on your life, on what you are learning about yourself through this new situation. Think about how you can improve as a human being, how God may be doing something new in your own life, so that when this crisis and confinement is over, you will emerge as a stronger, happier, kinder, better person. And every so many days, if you're able, you may feel like taking a Quiet Day, just like this, to be in silence, to reflect, to think, to meditate. Times to be spiritually nourished and refreshed.

10. Pray. Prayer underpins all the above. Let prayer sustain who you are and what you do during these challenging times. Take time to be in God's presence, to hear God's voice in the silence of your hearts, in the reading of the scriptures, in your own breathing – the breathing that reminds you that you are alive, the breathing that reminds you that God's *ruah*, God's breath, God's life, dwells deep within you, that God's love fills every bone, muscle and cell in your body. And in that place of prayer, also open your heart to God, bring to God the needs of the world around you and of people you care for, and of those who are in greatest need. Take time to pray.