

This is **Cup of Sunshine** – your Friday Podcast brought to you by the Phoenix Centre Team of the Deutsche Internationale Schule Johannesburg.

Welcome! I'm Dr. Ursula Froschauer the psychologist for the grade 5s-12s at the Deutsche Internationale Schule in Johannesburg. Over the next few weeks my colleagues, Frau Fleck, Frau Schäfer, Frau Gießen-Hood and I are going to share some helpful hints and tips for managing life during the uncertain times of Covid-19. Today I would like to speak about **structure and routine in our lives**.

Before the South African government declared a state of disaster it is likely that our lives were characterised by consistent and predictable structures and routines. We would wake up at the same time most mornings and go to bed at the same time most evening. Meal times were most likely set and everything that we had to do throughout the day followed a relatively predictable sequence. Times have changed and consequently we need to change to adapt to these new times. Some of us might have the freedom of waking up and going to bed whenever we feel like it, watching endless hours of Netflix, wearing our pyjamas day in and day out and eating enough food in one day to feed an army for a month. This kind of a routine might work for us for a few days, but in the long run we could be suffering the consequences of stress, anxiety and depression.

So, what needs to change? First of all, we need to create structure in an unstructured environment. Waking up and going to bed at the same time every weekday can be helpful to build the scaffolding for this structure. Here it might be helpful to consider how many hours of sleep you and those you live with require and to build around that. For example, if you require 9 hours of sleep and want to wake up by 6am you will need to be sleeping by 9pm. Next, we need to think about your morning routine, because how the day starts can often determine how the day unfolds. Checking your messages or emails first thing can put you in a spin, and panic and anxiety can rise from that. Instead consider easing into your day with a quiet moment of **deep breathing, meditation, prayer** or **reading something inspirational**. **Yoga** and other forms of **exercise**, such as strength training and skipping, could be a great way to get your energy levels up for the day. If you find that having a quiet moment to yourself is not possible, invite those that you live with to join in your morning routine. Now that you've started your day with more focus, plan your day: plan **mealtimes**, **meeting** times, **work** times, time to **relax**, time to **play**, time with **family** and if you didn't get to exercising in the morning, plan in time to exercise later in the day. For learners it can be helpful to follow their normal timetable to ensure that they cover all the work given to them. Hopefully with a clear structure in place you will find getting into a familiar routine much easier. We generally feel safer and calmer when life is more predictable, so by creating a structure for your day and week you'll be able to create a feeling of safety and calmness for yourself. I have noticed that people who are approaching their lockdown days and weeks with a plan seem to be coping much better than people who have unstructured days.

That's all for today. I hope you'll join us next week for more helpful hints and tips for managing life during the times of Covid-19.

