

What's Next after RMC0: Self-Care Tips to Adopt

By _____

Dr Crendy Tan Yen Teng and Dr Zhooriyati Sehu Mohamad
Head of Department, Psychology / Head of Programme, Psychology
Faculty of Social Sciences and Liberal Arts



First discovered in Wuhan, China, before subsequently spreading around the globe causing over 9.7 million infections and almost half a million deaths worldwide, COVID-19 is one catastrophic disease that has not been seen since the Spanish flu. In an effort to fight the infection, governments around the world have taken strict measures on physical distancing, with social gatherings and acts of affections are now being heavily frowned upon and discouraged. With no stopping point for life's uncertainties in sight, the pandemic has shed light on one of the biggest elephants in the room: mental health.

Deaths, loss of income and staying home in isolation for weeks and months on end are among the major factors of depression and severe anxiety. As companies and learning institutions adopt the work and study from home model, big decisions were made on keeping jobs that are considered 'essential'. Employee lay-offs have grown increasingly rampant, resulting in a recession that is far worse than the 1997 financial crisis. How is one supposed to take this new 'normal'?

Thanks to the efficiency of the frontliners in Malaysia, the country has seen a lot of improvements among patients diagnosed with the disease, allowing it to slowly move on to a Recovery Movement Control Order (RMC0) period, before eventually and hopefully progressing to a post-COVID-19 phase. However, as retailers re-open their doors and companies begin to operate under the 'new normal' conditions, many struggle in adapting to the changes that come with a series of challenges. Therefore, it is important for us to find the right coping mechanisms as we adapt to the changes, among which, can be found in the list of tips below:

SELF-CARE TIPS YOU CAN FOLLOW

Mental health should never be regarded as lesser than physical health as its severities can be as equally, or in fact, even more detrimental.

- i. Be more aware and sensitive with yourself – Having these awareness and sensitivities allows you to understand your own psychological needs and find ways to fulfil them.
- ii. Recognise the problems confront them – Do not run away from any issues that you may have. Instead, try to find solutions to overcome them or speak to someone who can help.
- iii. Focus on the things that you can control – Understand that the pandemic is a traumatic event for everyone, and beyond anyone's power. However, you can still manage the way you handle the situation. Do not challenge yourself to take up new tasks/roles when you are not ready as they will add more stress. There are days where you will feel unmotivated and unproductive, and that is totally alright.
- iv. Be positive – While you are not expected to remain positive at all times, being optimistic allows you to navigate through difficult moments in ways that could be advantageous for you.
- v. Make some time for relaxing activities – Whether it's meditation, yoga, physical workouts, or watching movies, these relaxing activities can help you to release stress.
- vi. Set small goals – Always do one thing at a time as this can help us to focus better and get closer to our goals.
- vii. Seek professional help – With the stigma shrouding mental health slowly dissipating with time, let yourself know that seeking professional help from mental health experts is not only acceptable, but it is also healthy and highly encouraged, even if you don't happen to be at your worst. There are many mental health services available in Malaysia, many of those that you can even access online.