

## Managing Isolation During COVID-19

Social distancing means putting physical space between yourself and others and is encouraged or mandated in most states. The phrase “physical distancing” might in fact be a better term to use, as we hope socialization is maintained during this time. It’s okay to feel uncomfortable, isolated, scared, or frustrated. Many of us feel that way. We are all adjusting to this new normal and the feelings that come with it. In a matter of days, we have been thrust into a new reality of daily life. It cannot be ignored that social distancing and such sudden changes have psychological impacts. These may not all be bad, but it’s important to acknowledge the difficulties.

### Managing the psychological impact of **social distancing**:

- Acknowledge and validate how others feel. People are feeling scared, lonely, concerned, and bored. It is normal to experience a mix of emotions. It is also normal and okay to feel disappointed as many important life events are cancelled or postponed.
- Use this as an opportunity to practice kindness toward others. Check in on loved ones who might be having a hard time. Donate to local organizations if you can.
- Use this as an opportunity to practice self-compassion. It’s okay to find this difficult. There’s no rule book on social distancing. This level of self-isolation is unprecedented for us. Can you let go of some expectations of normality or expectations of productivity?
- Ask for help. Helping each other connects us. That’s something we all need right now.
- Do things that you enjoy. Read a book, bake, watch a new movie, or create art. None of this has to be perfect, but adding enjoyable moments to your life at home is still necessary.
- Be creative in how you communicate with others so you can continue connecting in meaningful, rewarding ways. When using video modalities of communication, eye contact, head nods, smiles, voice and tone, and body gesture remain powerful tools to convey warmth and support without compromising quality interaction.
- Stay physically active. Many gyms, yoga studios, and physical trainers are creating virtual classes, many for no charge. Not only is physical exercise good for your physical health, but it has been shown to improve mood too. Exercise within your abilities. Even 5–10 minutes can benefit you.
- Connect with nature by taking a walk, running, or bike riding as long as you maintain the appropriate 6-foot distance. Sit in the sun on your patio or in your yard.
- If you’re working from home, set regular work and break times. Take some time away from your work to eat lunch and stretch.
- Spend time with friends and family virtually. This can be as simple as a telephone call or trying one of the many digital hangout spaces that are now available to us. There are apps that connect you with others so you can sing karaoke, watch movies, dance, or play board games together; of course, there are also many platforms and apps that allow you to talk “face to face.”

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