



Coping with Social Isolation During Quarantine/Containment

As concerns about Coronavirus have increased the need to practice social distancing and self-quarantine, many of us are grappling with multiple losses all at once—a drop in meaningful activities and social engagement, financial strain, and a lack resources and access to typical coping strategies. Across the world, many people are struggling with feelings of loneliness, depression and anxiety. The good news is, in addition to protecting your physical health, there are steps you can take to protect and promote *emotional* health during this trying time.

Maintain social connections. Take advantage of things like FaceTime, Skype, and other video conferencing tools to stay connected. Or, pick up the phone—call your friends and neighbors, especially if you know someone who lives alone. You might even want to invite someone to have a regular “check-in” time to help you both feel more connected.

Talk about your feelings—be open with others and brainstorm together things you could do right now to help each other. You might also want to look for online support groups.

Create and follow a daily routine—routines help us to feel more purposeful and empowered. Even if you don’t leave the house, try to include regular times for work, exercise, social connection, and enjoyable activities. It’s also helpful to try to stick to a sleep schedule.

Add light to your day—bright light (preferably from being outside in the sun or sitting near a window), especially earlier in the day, can help boost mood and physical health.

Practice good self-care: keep yourself both resilient by practicing self-care activities, including:

- Try to eat mainly whole foods (such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and nuts/seeds), and drink plenty of water; limit intake of caffeine and alcohol.
- Do whatever you can to ensure getting enough sleep and rest.
- Make movement a priority—put on music and dance, go for a walk, climb the stairs...try to move your body as much as possible.
- Relax by doing things that work for you such as taking deep breaths, stretching, meditating, listening to music, or engaging in pleasurable hobbies.
- Focus on positive parts of your life, like connections with loved ones. Keeping a gratitude journal may also be helpful.

Set boundaries around your work hours—when at home all day, it’s easy to exacerbate feelings of isolation by working excessive hours. Try to create structure with your working hours and routines that will help you transition from being “at work” to off duty.

Check-in with yourself frequently and heed warning signs, such as:

- Physical symptoms such as aches and pains, loss of appetite, and/or changes in energy or activity level



- Changes in mood and/or feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness, or depression
- Inability to carry out normal tasks/duties at home or at work
- A desire to increase use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs
- Changes in sleep patterns—sleeping more or trouble sleeping

These are all signs that you could benefit from professional support. Remember too that people with pre-existing mental health conditions and those helping with the response to the coronavirus may be at an increased risk of experiencing psychological distress.