

COVID-19 / Coronavirus Advice and Support Dr Phil Lurie, Clinical Psychologist

Handout 3. Social Connectivity in Social Isolation

Keeping connected to others can feel difficult when we are isolated. Although we may not be in physical proximity with others, we can take advantage of phone calls and other means of communication (video calls, messages, group chats and e-mails). This will allow us to feel less lonely, more supported, and it can be fun if we are creative. Here is some advice to help manage this:

SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY

- Shared entertainment

Organise a group video call, or set up a social event focused on a form of entertainment, such as a synchronised movie night, a shared playlist for a 'home disco', a games night, or a book club.

- Shared challenges that maintain health

Work out together at the same time using an exercise video from the internet. Other ideas include to learn a language alongside one another, or cook the same recipe and share photos of the results.

- Games and learning

There are many online games and apps that we can play alongside others, including ones that exercise our brains, such as word games and general knowledge quizzes.

- Encourage one another

Ask others about what goals and hobbies they have always put off but wanted to try, e.g. drawing, singing, creative writing, or even a change of career. We may find ourselves with more time to research new pursuits and, with support from someone else, maybe we might feel inspired to try it.

SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER

- Offer one another a safety net

We all need help from people we trust during difficult times, so remember to check in with loved ones about how they are coping, but also know that you deserve to share your own worries and fears.

- Agree to limit talk of the news

We are bombarded by constant exposure of the news, so agree to drop talk of current events and sharing articles to a minimum, and instead talk about other topics, shared memories, or focus on fun activities. Don't feel guilty to ask others to stop talking about distressing news if it is upsetting to hear.

GIVE OTHERS SPACE

- Find a routine

If you share space with others, agree on a schedule of shared and separate activities. Respect others' need for privacy, otherwise even the closest of people can find themselves frustrated at one another.

- Take turns with chores

Agree on a cleaning and cooking schedule if living with others, but be mindful that we all have difficult days, so be flexible if they are struggling mentally or physically and require extra support.

ENJOY YOUR OWN COMPANY

- Engage in meaningful activity for yourself

Whether living alone or with others, practise spending time in your own company by focusing on meaningful activities or attending to chores that you've put off. (Now is a good time to sort photos!) This will also give you interesting things to talk about rather than conversations turning to the news.

We collectively face difficult times with Coronavirus, and I would like to offer ONLINE support to anyone experiencing low mood, anxiety, worry and/or panic or other difficulties. It is especially important to talk to a professional if you are concerned about the mental health effects of potential/actual isolation. Please contact me at skypeclinicalpsychologist@gmail.com for more.