

COVID-19 isolation: You're not alone

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For most people, the term “social distance” is contradictory to the very nature of who we are: social beings whose very existence relies on interacting with others, whether through families, workplaces, neighborhoods, nations and beyond. So when we’ve been asked to “social distance” due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us may feel alone – physically, psychologically, and of course, socially.

Recognizing May as Mental Health Awareness Month, Beacon Health Options is providing tips about the psychological stress that social distancing can have on your mental health and to remind you that you’re not alone. In fact, in some ways, you may be more connected to the world than ever before simply due to the common experience of a pandemic, which does not discriminate in its effect.

Why, then, do I feel so alone? The simple answer is because you, and perhaps a few loved ones, are indeed physically alone – in your home, with little opportunity for outside diversion. You miss the daily interactions that you probably never took much notice of: a daily trip to your area coffee shop, the casual conversation in the hallway at work, the daily exchange with fellow commuters – not to mention the lack of get-togethers or going out to dinner with family and friends.

Tips to help you feel less isolated

But recognize this: You are not alone. Remind yourself that people next door and around the globe are going through the same feelings of isolation and loneliness. That said, there are steps you can take in real-time to make day-to-day life less lonely.

1. *Be proactive about reaching out.* Don’t expect the world to come to you. Be proactive about contacting family and friends via text, email, Zoom meetings and more. In fact, be disciplined about it. Make sure you contact someone every day, even if it’s just for a few minutes.
2. *Open up.* Be honest about how you’re feeling. If the loneliness is becoming overwhelming, let a friend or family member know. You may be surprised that they’re experiencing very similar feelings, and that shared experience will make you feel less alone.
3. *Volunteer, if you can.* There are many virtual [volunteer opportunities](#), such as classroom teaching or working on crisis text lines. If you know how to sew, masks are very much needed. Also, many people need food and other supplies delivered to their homes.

4. *Limit media overload.* Too much information on COVID-19 can accelerate our sense of isolation. Watch a movie or read a book that connects you to the larger human experience and the resiliency people can have to overcome challenges.
5. *Rediscover life's simple pleasures.* You're probably already noticing more walkers and runners in your neighborhood. If you're not yet one of those people, take up walking or running yourself. Both are excellent forms of exercise that get you out of the house and boost your mood by releasing [endorphins](#).
6. *Stay busy.* If you have a project, you have less time to think about your social isolation. Is there a project around the house that you've been meaning to do, such as clean out your closets or construct your family tree? As the adage goes, there's no time like the present.

One final tip. Have faith that one day this will all end. Life may look a little different, but we will go back to our true social selves. In the meantime, remember that you are not alone. In the words of Sebastian Junger, author of [Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging](#), "Disasters . . . create a 'community of sufferers' that allow individuals to experience an immensely reassuring connection to others."