



Developing Good Habits to Stay Healthy in Isolation can Last a Lifetime

By Lee Weiser

Sheltering in place can be especially difficult if you are marooned away from home, but there are ways you can take care of yourself that strengthen your mental health to help you avoid feelings of isolation, anxiety, and boredom. Sometimes it is the simple things that keep us grounded.

Reach out:

Research shows that it can be stressful to be separated from loved ones. Even wearing a facemask can contribute to feelings of social isolation. Everyone needs social contact, so finding ways to connect with others is essential. To avoid feelings of isolation use social media. Text, call, email, or use video platforms to reach out to friends and family often. Reconnect with people you haven't been in touch with recently.. You don't need a reason to make the call. Caring is enough. Offer emotional support to others. Volunteer to help a neighbor, or for a group that delivers groceries, or does errands for immune-compromised people.

Take care of your body:

Does your community mandate prohibit going outside? If not, take advantage of fresh air and the restorative properties that nature offers by taking a brisk walk. Just 30 minutes, done regularly, can make a big difference. Exercise is an evidence-based way to release stress, increase relaxation, and enhance your mood. If you are housebound there are plenty of ways you can keep moving and ensure that indoor exercise is a part of your daily routine. Put on your favorite music and dance. Mix it up. With the help of videos you don't need a personal trainer to get up and move. There is a huge variety of exercise videos on Youtube for every fitness level. Exercise has a positive impact on sleep as well as mood. Sleep is beneficial during stressful times and aids in keeping your mind and body healthy. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals and avoid alcohol and drugs.

Take care of your mental health:

Psychological distress is common both during and following a period of quarantine. However, you can take steps to protect your mental health and well-being. While it is important to have information from reliable sources, take breaks from the news, and take your mind off personal worries by listing some things you would like to accomplish. Take time to unwind. Read your favorite poem. Spend time cultivating positive emotions, like love and gratitude. Gratitude can help reduce anxiety and depression. Once a day, make a mental list of the things for which you are grateful. Find new projects to work on that can give you a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Learn something new. Research shows that the birth of new neurons in the adult brain helps rein in the activity of stress-responsive cells. This, in turn, reduces stress-induced anxiety. While the quarantine may be temporary, the coping skills you use during this period of isolation are the same ones that will be useful after the pandemic passes. Good health habits and good connections with other people help us overcome the daily obstacles we face and make life's difficult times easier to bear.