



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at Hays Companies



OVERCOMING LONELINESS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

As public health officials work to slow the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), many have recommended social distancing and self-quarantining. Some states across the country have issued orders for people to stay at home unless it's essential they leave, and some employers have had to send employees home or ask them to work remotely. While these actions can help slow the spread, they can have negative effects on your mental health.

What Is Loneliness?

While the words may sound alike, loneliness and being alone are not the same thing. Loneliness is a subject that has been studied for a long time in psychological literature.

Loneliness can lead to an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and dementia. According to the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, loneliness and social isolation can be as damaging as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Overcoming Loneliness During the Pandemic

If you're feeling lonely in these uncertain times, you're not alone. Many Americans are trying to overcome those same feelings. Fortunately, there are many things that you can do to fight loneliness and maintain your mental well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stick to a Schedule

One of the best things that you can do to fight loneliness is to create a new normal by sticking to a schedule. For example, if you're used to going to the gym before work, try to wake up early and get an at-home workout in before you start your workday from home. Build in times for meals and short breaks like you would for a normal workday in the office.

Maintaining as much normalcy as possible with your daily routine can help lift your mood and prevent boredom and distress from taking over. It can also help make the days feel structured rather than long and endless.

Use Technology to Connect With Loved Ones

When in quarantine or self-isolation, it can be easy to feel lonely. Fortunately, advancements in technology have made it easy to connect with others without having to physically be in contact with them. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recommends reaching out to loved ones with technology to reduce feelings of loneliness and anxiety, and to supplement your social life while you're quarantining or social distancing. If you're feeling down, use video-calling technology



or social media to get in touch with friends and family.

Get Plenty of Exercise

Exercising is a great way to boost your mood, ease stress and feel productive. Your physical and mental health are interconnected, so it's essential that you focus on both of them while you're staying at home.

If it's safe for you to do so, consider going for a walk around your neighborhood or exercising in your backyard. Going outside can help boost your mood and fight loneliness by increasing your body's levels of vitamin D.

Another way to get exercise at home is to look up workouts on the internet. If you belong to a gym, check online to see if they've published at-home workouts that you can try too.

Remain Informed, But Don't Obsess

The COVID-19 pandemic is a rapidly evolving situation, and it seems that there's new information daily. While it's important and beneficial to your health to remain informed about the situation, it's detrimental to your mental health if you obsess over the news. Moreover, excessively checking the news can make you feel even more isolated. Instead of monitoring the news all day from home, consider checking for updates once in the morning and once at night.

Practice Mindfulness and Gratitude

Taking five minutes a day to write down the things that you are grateful for has been proven to lower stress levels and can help you change your mindset from negative to positive. While you're quarantining or social distancing, it's important to build time into your routine to practice positivity or express gratitude in an effort to change your mindset and boost your mood.

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented changes in many people's day-to-day lives. By keeping the above tips in mind, you can be well on your way to fighting loneliness during these uncertain times.

If you have concerns about your mental well-being while you're in quarantine, please contact your mental health

professional or use SAMHSA's National Helpline by calling 800-662-HELP (4357).