

# *ON THE FRONT LINES*



Take A Stand For Mental Health

## Isolation & Loneliness During the Coronavirus Pandemic



**Canadian Mental  
Health Association**  
Windsor-Essex County

*Community well-being is our sole focus.*

# What Is Social Isolation?

- An objective state
- Lacking a sense of belonging
- Lacking engagement with others
- Minimal number of social contacts
- Minimal number of fulfilling and quality relationships
- Usually related to (or resulting from) barriers to social participation



# What Is Loneliness?

- A subjective and negative experience, involving feelings of loss of companionship and distress
- Can occur in response to social isolation, or in the absence of it
- It is a normal human emotion that for most people varies across the lifespan
- Can occur when there is a mismatch between the quantity or quality of social relationships that a person has compared to what they want



(Cattan et al., 2003; Victor et al., 2012; Perlman & Peplau, 1981; De Jong Gierveld, 2011)

# Belonging = Connections + Engagement

(relationships with people) (participation in community)

When people feel a strong sense of belonging to their community, social inclusion improves & individuals report higher levels of positive mental health.



RELATIONSHIPS ARE THE AGENTS  
OF CHANGE AND THE MOST  
POWERFUL THERAPY IS HUMAN

LOVE.

- BRUCE PERRY

# Recognizing The Impact Of Isolation & Loneliness

- Covid-19 has had an impact on our social connection, isolation & loneliness.
  - ◆ 54% of Canadians feel lonely or isolated, according to a survey conducted by ipsos on behalf of global news. *This is according to data collected from 1,006 Canadians ages 18 and above via an online survey.*
  
- Loneliness is a major barrier to good health for everyone and it presents some unique and severe implications for older adults.
  - ◆ Self-isolation disproportionately affects older adults whose only social contacts are outside of their homes.
  - ◆ Those who don't have close family or friends living within their personal "safe-zones" and who rely on outside contact through social programs and community activities can be placed at increased risk of mental health problems (Armitage & Nellums, 2020).



# Recognizing The Impact Of Isolation & Loneliness

- Working remotely can cause people to feel isolated, making it more important to routinely check in with your team & coworkers.
- Loneliness can lead to depression and other mental health issues.
  - ◆ Be aware of significant changes you may see in your team member's personality or work product, because it may be a sign that a person is struggling.





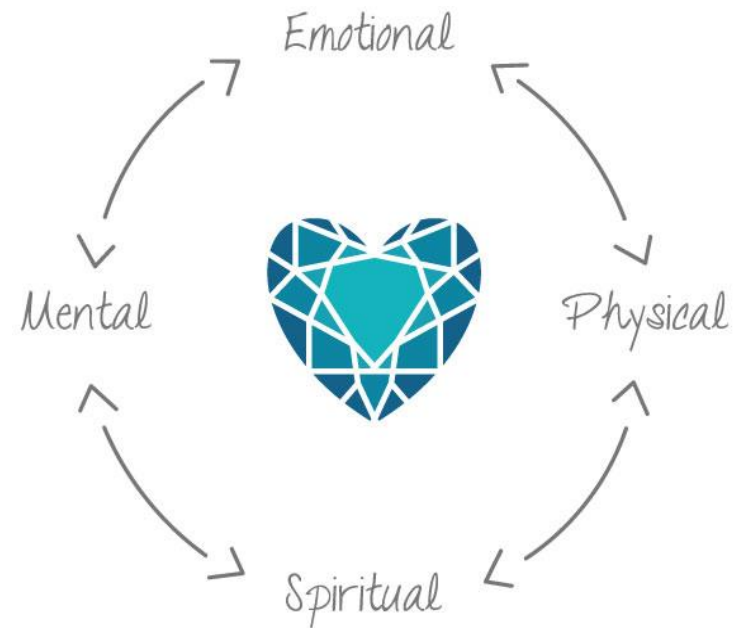
# Tips For Maintaining Social Connectedness





# Embrace Your Feelings

- Acknowledging uncomfortable feelings can give you power over those emotions.
- Don't think about feelings as positive/negative.
  - ◆ Feelings can represent how you connect to your environment and signal what actions you should take to make yourself comfortable.
- Be mindful of how loneliness can manifest in physiological sensations.
  - ◆ Recognizing alarming sensations in the moment and allowing them to pass may help neutralize them.



# Find Ways To Stay Relaxed



- Maintain pre-pandemic routines as much as possible (*give yourself leeway to make adjustments*).
- Take regular breaks.
  - ◆ *A quick walk around the block, playtime with the kids or indulging in a healthy snack can make a world of difference.*
- Keep things in perspective.
  - ◆ *Remind yourself this is a temporary period of isolation and our efforts are helping the greater community.*
- Utilize resources at your disposal.
  - ◆ *Does your organization have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) in place?*
  - ◆ *Nothing in place?*
    - *Take advantage of local crises or distress resources readily available*

# Connect To Your Social Networks

- **Video chats have become the next best thing to connect.**
  - ◆ Anything that mimics the reciprocity of real interactions is helpful (facetime, messenger, whatsapp, zoom, google hangouts).
  
- **Check in with elderly relatives, friends, and neighbours.**
  - ◆ Call at least one older adult each day who may be at risk for loneliness to ask how they're doing and listen to their response.
  - ◆ Help by offering to talk them through setting up virtual chats with their friends and family.
  
- **Spend at least 15 minutes each day talking with or writing to a loved one.**
  - ◆ When done consistently that small amount of time can make a big difference in how connected we feel.

# Connect To Your Social Networks

Being alone physically doesn't mean we have to be alone socially.

- Make time to connect & reach out If a religious organization, social center, or other social connection has been an important part of your life.
- If you feel that you don't have relationships you can draw on there are opportunities for building new ones.

*Make a list: What are your interests? What do you enjoy doing? What type of people are you most comfortable with?*

TOO OFTEN WE UNDERESTIMATE  
THE POWER  
OF A TOUCH,  
A SMILE, A KIND WORD,  
A LISTENING EAR,  
AN HONEST COMPLIMENT,  
OR THE SMALLEST ACT OF CARING.  
ALL  
OF WHICH HAVE THE POTENTIAL  
TO TURN A LIFE AROUND.  
-LEO BUSCAGLIA

WORD  
Sway

# Social Connection - Virtual

2 ways to overcome loneliness: nurture your existing relationships or form new ones.

- Zoom, Google Hangouts, Facebook Live, WhatsApp, Messenger
- Connect with your colleagues
  - ◆ Talk about things unrelated to work, share a joke or funny story, try not to make every conversation about COVID19
- Virtual Museum Tours
- Virtual concerts – Check out the social media of your favorite musicians and they may be giving concerts. [Billboard.com](https://www.billboard.com)
- One-minute kindness: When you find yourself scrolling through people's posts, stop and send one of them a few kind words.
  - ◆ extra kindness helps to counter the stress and uncertainty of the coronavirus.



# Self-Care

- Constant news updates can create more stress.
  - ◆ Plan how you want to receive important information and take mental and physical breaks.
- Saying “no” is a healthy boundary.
  - ◆ You cannot pour from an empty cup.
- After Work
  - ◆ Consciously transition from work to home
- Make sleep a priority and block off time to do so.
  - ◆ *Be as consistent as possible with your sleep patterns.*
  - ◆ *Make your bedroom a sleep sanctuary; this means not working in your bedroom, or doing other activities that normally occur outside of the bedroom.*

did u take care of urself today?  
eat something? drink water? do  
something that makes u happy?  
allowed urself to feel whatever ur  
feeling?? huh?? do it





# Rediscover Your Uniqueness

- Use isolation as an opportunity to better get to know and understand yourself outside of who you are when interacting with other people.
- Focus on the opportunities isolation provides.
  - ◆ Take advantage of extra time to make positive changes or pursue goals you may have put off.
- Get to know what coping strategies work for you.
  - ◆ create a mental health toolbox of activities



# Start A New Project



## → Free online courses

- ◆ Webinars
- ◆ <https://www.coursera.org/learn/the-science-of-well-being>
- ◆ [Duolingo](#) – free language lessons

## → Spring clean

- ◆ Re-organize cupboards
- ◆ A spot of decorating

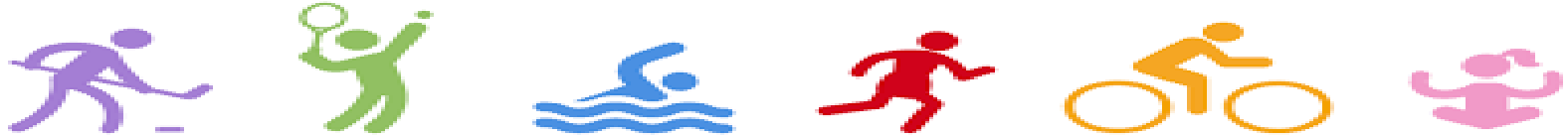
## → Reading

- ◆ Make a list of all the books you've wanted to read for a while, and then spend your evenings steadily working through that list.

## → Hobbies

- ◆ Arts and crafts
- ◆ Playing musical instruments, singing or listening to music
- ◆ Cooking
- ◆ Writing, vlog, journaling

# Keep Active



- Good for our physical & mental health.
- Periodically, get up and move around your home.
- Walking, stretching, planks or jumping jacks, whatever works best for you to reduce or alleviate stress and increase endorphins.
- Many gyms and fitness centers are offering free livestreams or app-based workouts for members and the general public, so check online to see what's available.
- If you are stuck inside, here are some other options:
  - ◆ Yoga options online:
    - [Yogawithadriene](#)
    - [Go4life](#) – beginner and modifiable workouts from the national institute on aging
    - [Do yoga with me](#)

# Boredom

Keep busy in order to stave off boredom and potential impacts on your psychological response to COVID-19.

Here are some ideas:

- Stay connected: There are different online platforms for games/entertainment to help you stay connected with your loved ones.
- Jump on a viral challenge: There are countless challenges on social media that encourage people to try something different and share it with the online community. Try “draw something”, “until tomorrow” or “see a dog, send a dog”.
- Discover a new hobby
- Organize!

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