

Coping With Social Distancing For Those That Live Alone



The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent stay-at-home orders have put a strain on all of us. While things are gradually opening up, unfortunately we know there might be more waves. Isolating without others presents a unique set of challenges in these already tough times. Living alone may require deliberate planning of your days during this time. **Below are some tips for those that live alone:**

- **Nurture your existing relationships.** More time at home offers more time to call, write, and video chat with loved ones. Consider a weekly Zoom meeting if you have loved ones who live far away, and/or connect with friends for exercise classes, book groups, and other creative activities. If you find the lack of contact with others causes you to feel down, anxious, or you find yourself engaging in unhealthy behaviors, consider scheduling a telehealth session with a therapist who can help you.
- **Take care of your body.** Healthy eating, exercise, socialization, and sleep are always important and even more so during times of stress or uncertainty. Being outside is another way to help your mind and body. Taking care of yourself can improve your mental and physical health.



- There are many free workouts available online. You can simply search YouTube or Instagram depending on what type of workout you are interested in (yoga, body weight exercises, running, etc.). To hold yourself accountable, keep track of your workouts (there are several free apps to assist), have an accountability buddy, or even consider a friendly competition with friends.
 - To help nourish your body, try to make cooking a fun exercise by finding new recipes or food items to try; the act itself can relieve stress and distract you. If cooking for just yourself seems like a lot of work, make enough to have leftovers, or drop off a portion at a neighbor's home. Aim for naturally colorful meals and whole grain foods, and limit the amount of sugar, salt, and simple carbohydrates.
- **Dive into a new skill or hobby.** Exploring a new creative outlet or improving upon an existing skill set can boost your mental health. This could be something like researching a new topic of interest, learning to play a new game, diving into a craft like cross-stich, baking, or gardening. Pencil some time into your day to dive into your chosen activity and even consider joining an online group that supports the hobby, too. All that being said, forgive yourself on the days you just don't feel up to this – that's normal, too!
 - **Keep to a schedule.** When loneliness can feel like it will never end, trying to make these days feel as "normal" as possible may help you get through. Start each day with a plan of a few things that you will do. Tracking these things can help you feel proactive. Keeping a diary of what you did and how it made you feel can help you find the activities that bring the most enjoyment.
 - **Do something meaningful.** If you are finding that you feel not just bored, but also as though you are losing your sense of self, then a loss of meaning might be affecting you. All of us want to feel like we belong and that our life has importance, which is why incorporating meaningful activities into each day is important. Doing something meaningful each day, even if only for a short period, will give you a sense of purpose and identity. Explore whether there's a way to safely volunteer (check with your local religious or community organizations to see what kind of help they may need that you feel comfortable doing) or reach out to someone you know who may need help. Often people will accept help if it is offered but may not feel comfortable asking.
 - **Find sources of comfort.** Finding ways to give yourself comfort can help to improve your mental health. You can try things such as giving yourself a foot massage, taking a bath, focusing on a pet, reading your favorite book, cooking healthy comfort food, or lighting scented candles.
 - **Create something.** There's a reason why artists enjoy becoming swept away by their work. Expressing yourself through creative means can be therapeutic, whether it involves painting, writing, dancing, journaling, cooking, poetry, or a new home project. (Adapted from VeryWellMind.com)

If you find yourself with poor mental health while isolated during COVID-19, remember that Carebridge, Einstein's Employee Assistance Provider, is always there to help! Available 24/7/365, call them at 800-437-0911, to speak with a counselor.