

18 Helpful Hints for Individuals Sheltering Alone

Helpful hints for individuals who shelter in place during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

1. Shelter in place can be very stressful, and normal routines no longer exist. Television and other social media have ongoing information and statistics about the number of people infected and those that have died in the U.S. and around the world, which can be overwhelming. In addition, things changed very quickly, from closing schools, restaurants, online teaching at all universities, etc. This can also be very stressful, and not having peer or family support can be a lonely situation. Reaching out to family and friends through social media is important and can help with the feelings of isolation and loneliness.
2. Be creative and figure out how to do things from home. For example, a person in France ran a marathon running back and forth on his 23' balcony. Think about things that can help you deal with the uncertainty about the pandemic.
3. Stressors such as the COVID-19 pandemic can impact us as we process information, especially short-term memory (e.g. recalling things that just happened, reading something and not recalling what you just read, etc.). That is normal in stressful times that are ongoing such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Be kind to yourself and know this is temporary and will get better as we return to a life without COVID-19.
4. You might experience anxiety: tremors and twitching, headache, muscle tension, fatigue, insomnia, heart pounding, sweating, stomach pain, dizziness, shortness of breath, irritability, restlessness, feeling tense and jumpy, trouble concentrating, and feeling apprehensive. Reach out to family and friends through social media. You can also contact a mental health professional to help you cope with the stress. Remember that many counselors today do tele-mental health.
5. You might experience depression: persistent sadness, feeling of hopelessness, feeling of emptiness, feeling anxious, feeling pessimistic, feeling helpless, feeling worthless, feeling guilty, and loss of interest or pleasure that were once important. Reach out to family and friends through social media. You can also contact a mental health professional to help you cope with the stress. Remember that many counselors today do tele-mental health. If your depression gets worse and you start feeling suicidal call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255 or suicidepreventionlifeline.org and veterans and military personal can contact the Veterans/Military Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255.
6. If you need to talk to someone as things feel overwhelming, or you have difficulty being isolated in your home, you can reach out and access some professional services through tele-mental health.
7. Some people try to cope with being at home and not having contact with others through unhealthy, even self-destructive behavior, such as excessive drinking, drug use, overeating, smoking/vaping, gambling, etc. It is better to reach out to a friend or family member through social media and talk about any concerns, or to just stay connected. You can also contact a counselor or call the Disaster Distress Helpline 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.
8. It is important to do good self-care such as getting adequate sleep, eating well, engaging in regular exercising, meditation, etc.
9. Develop a routine. Just as all of us had a routine before COVID-19, we need to develop a new routine that makes sense during the time we work from home. Routines (when to get up, eat, etc.) are important as they help us to have some predictability, and in a time of much unpredictability, this is very helpful.

10. Create routines in checking in with your family, friends, etc. Connect not only with email, but by phone, Skype, Zoom, Facebook, Twitter, etc., as this allows us to stay connected and be engaged.
11. Create opportunities for physical activities (treadmill, walking your dog, etc.) Keep social distancing and be safe. Going out and getting fresh air will be helpful (if you are not in quarantine). Remember, exercising helps develop endorphins, which help us to feel better.
12. Stay connected. We can connect through social media:
 - You can cook a meal and have other family members cook the same meal at the same time at their home while you are connected through social media (talk and enjoy each other's company) and share this experience even though you are in different locations.
 - While you might not go to a restaurant, you still can share a meal with a friend, a colleague, a family member using social media to stay connected and talk.
 - Take a coffee or tea break with a friend, family member, while engaging through social media.
13. Limit the amount of COVID-19 news. TV and other media coverage exposure can become very overwhelming, especially if we do not have the ability to talk about it.

Remember that watching long hours and getting repeated information about a shortage of masks, gowns and gloves putting health care workers at risk and the lack of ventilators can be overwhelming. Fearing whether all people can be treated, as well as how many people are infected and the number of people who have died, can over time become overwhelming and even lead to Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) in which the

person is traumatized watching someone else being at risk of injury, or worse, death. People with STS might experience concentration problems, sleep disturbances, avoidance of talking about COVID-19 and responding very strongly to information about COVID-19, isolation by not accessing social media, worries and fear of getting sick, restricted range of affect.

14. Stressful times that are ongoing, such as the pandemic, can result in older adolescents and young adults having a "foreshortened sense of the future" which means reassessing life and plans for the future, as these young people are faced with the reality that death can happen at any time, as they fear that they might not have the time to do all they want to do. They no longer feel invincible. It is important to remind these adolescents and young adults to not make any major life changes right now but wait until the pandemic is over.
15. If you can connect to elderly family members via social media, do so, to help them not be isolated and to assure that they are okay.
16. It is always helpful for people to express what they are feeling. Helpful things to do are talking to someone, journaling, drawing, and if you are a creative person with artistic abilities, you might create a dance, poem, story or music that expresses your feelings.
17. It is important to focus on positive things in your life. Every day, look for at least one positive thing
18. Make the commitment to reach out to at least one person each day through social media.