

## **Coping with isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic**

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The COVID-19 pandemic, along with the subsequent quarantine, has had a significant impact on people's emotional health and mental wellbeing. It has evoked feelings of fear, boredom, anxiety, depression and, perhaps most of all, isolation. It is normal to feel vulnerable and helpless in changing our situation and our feelings. There are things we can do to not only survive this time period, but actually learn to thrive and grow during it!

Choose to maintain a positive state of mind. Negative thoughts and feelings will happen occasionally, but whether we choose to dwell on them or let them pass quickly is up to us! Reframe distressful thoughts with reassuring messages such as, "This quarantine will end and I will see the people I care about." In the meantime, we can choose distractions and new activities to get through long days.

Do the things you never have time for in life. Paint, color, knit, scrapbook and binge-watch the TV series you normally don't see. Try a new recipe or learn to play an instrument. Start an herb garden in your kitchen! Do something outside the box, such as learning a new language, discovering yoga, or writing some poetry! Start a book club with friends that you can FaceTime, or use Zoom to have a virtual dinner party. Return to playing board games, card games or doing jigsaw puzzles for fun! Be active by dancing in your kitchen or finding exercise apps that interest you. Walk, jog or play outside.

Make chalk drawings on the sidewalk to share messages of hope and spread joy to people passing by. Support local restaurants by ordering carry-out and trying new places just to be adventurous. Many area churches are offering online services to provide spiritual support and a sense of community. Start a gratitude journal by writing down three things each day that make you happy or are blessings, and maybe find a partner to share this challenge. Reach out and call old friends you haven't connected with in a while. Send a card or quick note to someone who needs some cheering up, and you'll feel better too!

Whatever strategies you choose to make this moment in time a valuable experience, consider it a gift. Find your silver lining and know that this time will eventually pass, and life will happen again!