



Pandemic social isolation and mental health.

How we get through it, together.

Solitude is generally craved by many of us to relax and rejuvenate. However, social isolation and physical distancing is unwanted and unhealthy. We have all been mandated to follow physical distancing guidelines to limit the spread of the Coronavirus by quarantining and isolating ourselves to limit the spread of this deadly disease.

The COVID pandemic has forced us to socially isolate and cancel plans; it's caused anxiety when thinking about social interactions. We can't gather, play or work like we want and need to be healthy and happy. We are lonely. The social and emotional isolation connects our physical and mental health. Social isolation causes sleeplessness and reduced immunity. Loneliness causes increased anxiety, substance use, depression, and suicide.

How do we get through the effects of social isolation—anxiety and fear, anger and resentment, and frustration and irritability we are experiencing in the face of the restrictive health and safety measures we are living under?

Engage in relaxing activities like reading or listening to music. Follow a daily routine to promote a sense of purpose and normalcy. Maintain healthy habits by eating right, getting enough sleep and exercising. Stay connected by phone calls, email, texting, social media or videoconferencing. Stay informed about what is happening with the pandemic by finding a reliable news source, avoid negative news.

If the effects of social isolation persist, you may need therapeutic treatment. Isolation may be a sign of depression or an anxiety disorder. A trained therapist can help you identify underlying issues and develop a treatment plan to help you regain a sense of control over their social lives.

Individuals who experience any of the following should consider consulting a medical or mental health professional:

- Confused thinking
- Delusions or hallucinations
- Excessive feelings of anger or fear

- Extreme swings in emotion
- Inability to cope with daily problems
- Major changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Numerous unexplained physical ailments
- Prolonged depression
- Social withdrawal
- Substance abuse

Even now during our physical distancing mandates limiting in-person contact, one can connect with a mental health professional by phone or videoconference. If you know someone who might need assistance, help them out by encouraging them to seek help. It will go a long way to lessening the negative effects of isolation on the community.

Resources we recommend:

- Call us at Tri-County Mental Health Services at 1-888-304-4673 for a mental health screening and assessment for treatment.
- Call or text the 24/7 Maine Crisis Hotline at 1-888-568-1112 if you are concerned about someone's safety and need immediate help. A trained crisis counselor will find the help needed, close to home.
- Any person with suicidal thoughts can contact the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 for help and support. Chat and texting is available anonymously. Specialty care is provided for Native Americans and veterans.
- Refer teens 14-20 years old to the NAMI Maine Teen Text Support Line, 1-207-515-8398, where they can talk about their feelings and get support from another young person. The Support Line is available 12 pm to 10 pm.
- Visit www.211maine.org to find a treatment counselor close to your home or worksite. For treatment outside of Maine, call the SAMHSA National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP.

