

## **The Impact of Social distancing and Self-Isolation with Practical Suggestions**

### **1. Social Isolation**

**Impact:** We are all social and isolation is not natural for us – in fact our brains respond to rejection or social isolation similar to physical pain - so social isolation can really ‘hurt.’

**Practical Suggestions:**

- Maintain supportive interaction with young people. Tell them you care.
- If the young person is in their room a lot, knock on the door, talk over FaceTime or if possible encourage them out.

### **2. Unhelpful Coping Strategies.**

**Impact:** The stress might lead young people to cope in unhealthy ways such as spending many hours online, using drugs and alcohol or changes in their sleep (sleeping more or becoming nocturnal). This is not helpful. (Alternative strategies mentioned below).

**Practical Suggestions:**

- Monitor the how they use the internet in a support way (e.g. set a target number of hours online and think how to achieve it).
- Get them involved in alternative activities to manage their stress (see suggestions below or support them to think of others).

### **3. Boredom and Losing motivation.**

**Impact:** Being stuck inside and not having normal demands and activities can lead to boredom, losing motivation and depression and anxiety. Young people may stop attending to personal care for example, staying in pyjamas all day, sleeping in or staying up late. Procrastination and a feeling they can always ‘do it later’ and putting off study / tasks.

**Practical Suggestions:**

- Maintain a structure to the day
- Maintain night-time sleep routines
- Break the day into ‘chunks’ and plan activities for each ‘chunk’ of the day. i.e. mornings to complete college work or any online studying and afternoons a relaxing/bonding activity.

- Organise activities such as practice English, learn a new skill (.e.g art, craft) or take part in a group activity (e.g. sports, cooking, games they can play as a group)
- Physical activity: football, rounders, soft ball. If they cannot go out YouTuber fitness channels (recommended resources ie Joe Wicks, Fitness Blender (husband and wife team and so relatable to all genders), Heather Roberts, Faisal Abdullah (PMA Fitness)).

#### **4. Feeling out of control.**

**Impact:** The COVID-19 situation changes daily which leaves people feeling out of control and lead to lots of anxiety. This is likely to be particularly important for young people LAC and asylum seekers who have been disruption in their lives already. Finding ways to feel in control – perhaps with small things -can be helpful.

#### **Practical Suggestions:**

- Find ways to help young people feel in control such as keeping to a routine and setting achievable challenges.
- Get young people to keep note of their successes or progression/a gratitude list and write it down
- Remind young people why they have to isolate (e.g. the government guidelines), appeal to altruism (e.g. protecting others by isolating) and that it will not last forever (e.g. currently 7-14 days).
- Focus on concerns that young people can control and try to let other concerns go until there is more information.
- Meditation and mindfulness practice to help focus on the present (app Headspace) or Relaxation (yoga - Adriene is on YouTube is great).

#### **5. Irritability:**

**Impact:** Some young people will be closely confined with others (foster carers or other residents) which may lead to irritability. This can easily boil up if not addressed.

#### **Practical Suggestions:**

- Establish ways of sharing frustrations openly but respectfully – for example a daily check in/family meeting to prevent things boiling up.
- If living together, people may also want to designate a ‘personal space’ where they can be alone and let other residents know this.

#### **6. Caring role.**

**Impact:** As a carer you will experience many of the same feelings and challenges.

#### **Practical Suggestions:**

- Create time when the young people are not present to talk to someone about your own worries.
- Find support networks available to help you to implement things that help.
- [Read attached leaflet](#) on managing anxiety around COVID-19

Some reading if you want to know more;

- 'Social rejection shares somatosensory representations with physical pain' in PNAS published in 2011. Written by Kross, E., Berman, M., Mischel, W., Smith, E. and Wager, T.
- 'The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: a rapid review of the evidence' in The Lancet published in 2020. Written by Brooks, S, Webster, R., Smith, L., Wessely, S., Greenberg, N., Rubin, G. The Lancet
- 'Coping with life in isolation and confinement during the Covid-19 pandemic' in The Psychologist published in 2020. Written by Smith, N. & Barrett, E.

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