

Managing Your Mood While Observing Social Distancing

Objective

To manage your mood and reduce your stress level while adhering to social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

You Should Know

The coronavirus pandemic has undoubtedly caused major disruptions in your life. If you normally relieve stress by going to the gym, shopping at the mall, or getting together with friends, you might feel isolated and lonely while adhering to social distancing. Without access to your usual coping tools, it might be more difficult to manage stress and control your mood while experiencing sometimes high levels of distress.

Social distancing is counterintuitive to your basic need for connection with other people. This connection not only soothes your nervous system, but also strengthens your body's defenses to stress. The forced separation due to the COVID-19 pandemic might increase your distress and anxiety as you become more focused on yourself and perceived 'threats' around you.

This worksheet suggests ways to track your moods and cope with them in positive ways during social distancing. Please contact your therapist or doctor if your distress is interfering with daily functioning.

What to Do

There are number of things you can do to cope with stress and manage your moods in healthy ways – while observing social distancing.

Reach Out:

- Connect with friends and family by phone or email. Share your concerns and feelings with people you trust.
- Use FaceTime to have a video chat with a group of friends or family.
- Play boardgames with your children.
- Play with your pet.

Physical Activity:

- Many gyms are offering free virtual fitness coaching and exercise videos, including Gold's Gym and Planet Fitness.
- Stream a fitness video on YouTube.
- Go for a walk or jog.
- Lift hand weights or soup cans.
- Practice deep breathing or meditation, using an app or online video.

Express Your Creativity:

- Journal, write poetry, or express yourself through arts or crafts.
- Cook a healthy meal or a special treat.
- Take an online class or watch an instructional video through EdX, Coursera, or YouTube.
- Attend free online virtual museum tours, free live streams of concerts (including the Metropolitan Opera), and other entertainment.
- Start a project you have been putting off: reorganize the basement, paint a room, or complete a do-it-yourself home repair.

Observe Your Spirituality:

- Attend services at houses of worship via streaming services and online videos.
- View free classes on mindfulness and meditation through Kripalu, Shambhala Mountain Center, and other retreat centers' websites.

Add your own ideas here.

Now, select at least three activities from the list that you plan to do over the next week to manage your mood when feeling distress related to social distancing. Write them down below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Reflections on This Exercise

Which activities were most effective in managing your mood?

Describe how your moods and/or stress levels were impacted by scheduling daily activities.

Describe any obstacles or challenges you faced while doing those activities.

What can you do to overcome those challenges?
