



Mental Health during Social Distancing

Staying home from school, friends, and normal activities during a contagious disease outbreak can feel really difficult. Human beings are wired for connection to others. Social relationships help us manage stress and stay mentally healthy, so when we are physically distanced from others it can lead to feelings of worry, depression, and loneliness. Here are some ideas of what we can do to connect to others and feel better during social distancing.

1. Try to keep a routine for sleeping, eating, exercise, hygiene, study, and play. For example, try to sleep and eat meals at roughly the same times each day even though you aren't in school. Getting 8 hours of sleep and healthy meals helps your mental health.
2. Find ways to be productive and goal-oriented in this new routine. Dedicating time to cleaning, exercise, school-work, and accomplishing personal goals (like learning how to cook or finishing an art project) will help your mood.
3. Remember to fit in fun and social connection. You can connect to family and friends through social media, texting, or video chat (safe chat rooms: <https://www.common sense media.org/lists/safe-chat-rooms-and-social-sites-for-kids>). You can try scheduling a daily phone or video check in with someone you enjoy talking to so you have something to look forward to.
4. When you're alone try to find uplifting music, shows, and books to keep you occupied, or spend time outside or with a pet if you can. Ask a parent to help you make a list of all the things you still *can* do.
5. Try to keep your thinking positive. One great way to do this is to keep a daily journal where you write down what you are grateful for or what is going well.
6. Take a break from the news if it is causing you to worry.
7. Stretch, exercise, and take deep breaths to physically feel calmer.
8. If you are feeling down, talk about how you are feeling with family and friends. Make a telehealth appointment with your school counselor or a mental health counselor.
9. Download the Safe UT app so you can chat with a crisis counselor if you need to.
10. Remember that this situation is temporary, and that we are all in this together. Try to check in on your friends and family, and look for ways to offer kindness to others.