

Advice for young people who have to social distance or self-isolate due to COVID-19

Tips by stem4 CEO Dr Nihara Krause, Consultant Clinical Psychologist

Social distancing and/or self-isolating is an effective way to stop the spread of the Coronavirus infection and to protect older adults and those who have poor health. However, given the importance of belonging, social distancing is probably one of the hardest behaviours for young people to carry out. Dr Nihara Krause (CEO of teenage mental health charity stem4), encourages the use of the following tips for young people in order to maintain positive mental health amidst self isolation:

- View social distancing as ‘contact distancing’ rather than a distance from friendships. So, whilst you reduce contact to pass on an infection, boost your friendships by planning some on-line meetings with family members or a friend. Make these times special.
- FOMO? Feeling left out and actually being left out are two different things. Challenge why you perceive yourself to be left out, for example, is it related to attributing something negative to yourself such as a belief that ‘no one likes me’? Remind yourself of the fact that everyone has been asked not to connect. This will help you to change your thinking to something more positive.
- Whilst social distancing and loneliness are not the same, the feelings that are generated may be experienced in the same way. Counter this by thinking of ways to reach out and initiate a conversation with someone every day.



- Self-isolation might put things ‘on hold.’ This is especially hard if it’s something you’ve been preparing for like an exam, or something you’ve been looking forward to such as a birthday celebration or a holiday. Rather than feeling weighed down by not knowing how long to be ‘on hold’ for, or feeling frustrated by the lack of certainty, try and focus on the present. Take things one day at a time and make it work for you.
- Finding it hard to motivate yourself to keep up the daily schedule, revision or self-care plan you usually do? Give yourself a goal together with a meaningful incentive for achieving it. Do it, reward yourself for completing it and write down how it feels to have done it.
- Use this time to create something new. Rather than seeing it as ‘lost time’, you can see it as an opportunity to make something you don’t usually find the time to do happen, without all the usual distractions.

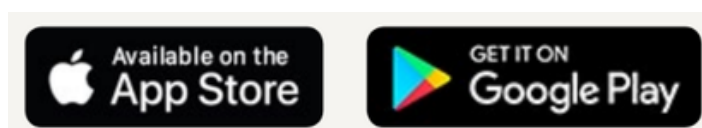


CLEAR FEAR



COMBINED MINDS

stem4 also provides clinically developed mental health apps that can be accessed anywhere for free. Clear Fear has a range of techniques to help teens manage anxiety whilst Combined Minds helps parents and friends support someone who is anxious. They are based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and a Strengths-Based Approach respectively and are available to download now from both Google Play and the App Store.



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