

NOMC's GUIDE TO COPING WITH LONELINESS DURING THE ISOLATION OF COVID-19

Humans, and especially New Orleanians, are by nature social beings. In this time of forced isolation and social distancing, it is normal to feel anxious, sad, fearful or lonely. The "stay at home" mandate can be especially difficult for people who live alone.



Janet E. Johnson, M.D., MPH
Associate Professor Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Division of Forensic Psychiatry

HOW TO DECREASE FEELINGS OF LONELINESS



Text and call loved ones.



Zoom/Skype/FaceTime loved ones. These apps are free and available on most phones, tablets and computers.



Read a good book.



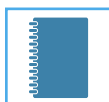
Watch a movie or a series that brings you joy.



Go for a walk (*keeping at least 6 feet distance from others and wearing a cloth mask*)



Consider fostering a pet if feasible for you.



Keep a journal and document events of the day, feelings and emotions, plans for when the stay at home order is lifted and funny or uplifting things you've heard.



Listen to music. If you are a musician/entertainer consider doing a virtual concert or live streaming performance via social media. If you're a fan, watch and support a musicians' live stream event.

Don't put overly high or unrealistic expectations on yourself. This is a stressful and uncertain time and for the vast majority of us, it is not the time that we are going to learn a new language or become a master chef. It is enough to just take care of yourself and your loved ones and and maintain your physical and mental health.

WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

If you experience several of the following symptoms for two weeks or more that make it difficult for you to function, it is important that you contact a medical or mental health professional.



A depressed or sad mood



Feelings of guilt or worthlessness



Difficulty with thinking or concentrating



Agitation or feeling slowed down



A marked change in appetite (*increased or decreased*)



A loss of interest or pleasure in things you previously found pleasurable and interesting



A sleep disturbance (*either difficulty falling and staying asleep or sleeping excessively*)

Thoughts of self-harm, suicide or a preoccupation with death ALWAYS require intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1.800.273.8255

Metropolitan Human Services District (24/7)

504.826.2675

Text HOME to 74174

SpeakingofSuicide.com/resources

JANET E. JOHNSON, M.D., MPH

Dr. Johnson has been one of the NOMC's vital mental health advisors and providers since Hurricane Katrina when she founded a non-profit organization, "Project Rising Sun" to provide therapeutic drumming circles and mental health screenings for our musicians' community. As a mental health consultant for Mercy Corps, she has worked in China and Haiti bringing mental health services to those amidst difficult times. For nine years she served as the Director of Medical Student Education in Psychiatry for Tulane University Medical School and is still involved in teaching residents, medical students and fellows. Dr. Johnson is currently focusing on her clinical work in forensic psychiatry and will become the director of the forensic psychiatry fellowship starting July, 2020.