



SOCIAL ISOLATION

SUPPORTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

** Veretis provides mental health and counselling support. The information below is in regard to how best to look after yourself mentally. For medical advice please consult a medical health provider and government policies.

Times are very uncertain at the moment and many people are being asked to make lifestyle changes to help society work through COVID-19. For many of us, these changes include working from home and restricting the amount of time we spend socially interacting.

As per our previous "1-pager" social isolation can pose various challenges for our mental health. Fundamentally, as social beings, we need social interaction or connectedness. Spending time isolated by ourselves limits the positive distractions available to us to dilute the amount of time we stress over COVID-19. Below are some helpful tips to help you adjust to and remain mentally resilient during any isolation.

How the EAP can help

It is natural to be feeling some worry and stress over COVID-19 and the impact it may have on us moving forward. The above tips will hopefully help manage some of those concerns, but if not and you feel like talking to a professional might help, the EAP is here to support you.

Our services are available via telephone and video-counselling ensuring that throughout this period you have easy access to professional support.

If you are struggling, please reach out to Veretis.

1300 878 379

info@veretis.com.au

www.veretis.com.au/eap

MANAGING SOCIAL ISOLATION

Maintain routine:

Part of maintaining good mental health during isolation is trying to maintain an element of routine. Ensure that you maintain the standard bedtime and wake times you would usually have and keep a standard pattern in your exercise and eating habits.

Through keeping a standard routine as much as possible, you will continue to engage in those daily habits which help you feel good and bring about a sense of accomplishment. A daily routine also helps give you a focus point which can help distract you from constantly ruminating about COVID-19

Realistic expectations, opportunities and short-term goals:

There are resources available to ensure that an element of our lives can continue as it regularly would, with only small adjustments needed. For example, working remotely through technology and virtual meeting rooms should enable many of us to continue being operational. However, we need to be careful not to put extra pressure on ourselves by being realistic with what we can achieve during this time.

- Set realistic expectations: Keeping up the same level of work, or personal engagements may be unrealistic and provide extra stress. Think about and be honest with; what is truly achievable given current circumstances? Do I need to extend certain deadlines or engage additional resources?
- Opportunities: Some changes will be needed, but these also pose opportunities. We just need to remember to reflect on them - E.g. avoiding the gym means that there is an opportunity to engage in exercise regime you would never have had time for or thought of. Social isolation means spending more time around the house. What are those jobs you have been putting off or haven't had time to get to?
- Short-term goals: Unfortunately, some of the changes and uncertainty will put a pause on some long term-goals we have had in place. This can be very disappointing, but remember it is not due to any failings by yourself. It is an uncontrollable external event which means that some of these goals need to be paused and only for now. Look to break down these longer term goals into shorter term ones and identify which ones are still achievable. If not possible, then it may require you to look for the 'opportunities' this period presents for you to achieve the other goals you have been waiting to get time to do.

MANAGING SOCIAL ISOLATION

Managing worry:

I have mentioned this previously, but cannot emphasise it enough. It is important that we stay informed of the situation, however, we need to be careful to notice the difference between "staying informed" and "excessively informed". By continuously checking on updates, discussing the situation with friends and engaging in media related to the COVID-19 we are "feeding our worry". This provides more and more stimulus to the anxious thoughts and can begin to cause "ruminative thinking" (The process of continuously thinking about the same thoughts, which tend to be sad or dark).

Adding and maintaining structure to your days, combined with achieving short-term goals and activities can help prevent you from ruminating on the uncertain and potential negative outcomes. Being aware is smart, whereas ruminating is detrimental. The big difference is being aware of which elements of the situation you are concentrating on. Are you thinking about things you can control (problem-solving), or are you thinking about the elements out of your control (ruminative)?

Problem-solving during times of uncertainty is important - it helps remind us of what we can control, not just what we can't.

Staying connected:

Even though you may be required to isolate, it is important not to disconnect. Staying socially connected helps provide routine and also gives ability to distract ourselves from ruminative thinking.

Staying connected is possible in these circumstances, but, requires some alternative methods to usual. Technology provides a great medium to do this. Phone calls, text messaging, video-calls or even just tagging a friend on a Facebook post are just some of the ways that we can achieve this. It is important to think about not just ourselves but also others. Who is it in your community that may be at risk of disconnecting if needing to isolate? The elderly in particular are a vulnerable part of the community. Make sure you reach out to others and "check-in" and help coach the elderly to use technology to stay adequately connected.

As always Veretis is here to support you and have put in the appropriate provisions to ensure we are able to continuously provide services no matter how much things change.

Please reach out on 1300 878 379, or send us an enquiry at info@veretis.com.au.

