



Coping with Isolation

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many individuals around the world were impacted by the psychological effects of social isolation. However, it is important to remember that being isolated can happen at any time.

Sometimes we have to adapt to staying at home for long periods and it is out of our control and comfort zone. It may be because of:

- Medical reasons
- Moving home
Starting University
- Changing a job and working from home

Adapting to being at home 24 hours a day 7 days a week can be very difficult for many of us.

It is important to adapt our routine and keep as much normality as we can to help us get through periods of isolation. We have everyday demands that we must attend to even if we need to adapt things a little to make them happen.

For example, it is really important to still have a morning routine, set your alarm, get washed and dressed and have breakfast. Not doing these things can lead to low mood and loss of purpose.

Exercising, socialising, having a healthy sleep routine, eating well and taking part in hobbies are all important parts of a healthy lifestyle and really help us manage the negative effects of isolation on our physical and emotional wellbeing.

It can take time to adjust to the change, but it is important to not put ourselves under too much pressure to get it all right all of the time. We need to learn to balance our needs, and the needs of our families and children. Especially if you are a parent or carer.

Planning helps us manage our time, feel we are using our time well and made achievements in each day. It also helps us keep to a routine and keep motivated.

When you are isolated time can drag and we can lose track. Planning our time helps us to make sure we are attending to practical problems like getting supplies such as food and medication and managing our finances. We may even need to reschedule or cancel events.

Using a calendar or planner will help you stay on track of your goals and enable you to find the balance between being productive, having down time and meeting your practical needs.

It is important to try and get physical exercise in our routines as this has a positive effect on our physical and mental health long term. If you are home due to a physical health problem, take advice from your medical professionals about what if any exercise you can do at home.

There are lots of free online workouts available for beginners to experts, that don't need equipment that will help, especially if you are not able to go for a walk or do not have outside space to exercise in or play a sport.

It can be difficult to keep in touch with people when you feel isolated, or are unable to get out and about. It is important to try and have contact with friends, colleagues and professionals.

There are several online support services including Big White Wall which is free to University of Bolton students. Big White Wall has courses to aid mental health, forum areas, support of professionals and is accessible 24 hours a day.

Online platforms such as Zoom, Facebook and Whatsapp can be a great way to interact with friends and family.

Hobbies and interests are an important part of maintaining our wellbeing all the time, but more important when isolated as it can help us be mindful and focus our mind on positive endeavours. There are many things to do, for example:

- Virtual tours of museums and galleries
- Online courses
- Reading
- Art and crafts courses
- Learning a new skill

But, we need balance. It is ok to plan in down time and rest and relaxation when we need it.

All these things will help us come through periods of isolation positively!

Access LEAP Online at: www.bolton.ac.uk/leaponline