



# TIPS FOR REDUCING ISOLATION

Isolation happens every day, not just because of 'social distancing'. In 2018, the health services organization, Cigna surveyed over 20,000 adults in the United States to measure isolation and loneliness, and found that *most Americans are considered lonely*, and only 53% have meaningful daily interactions with others. The two largest contributors to feelings of loneliness were (1) interests and ideas are not shared by those around you, and (2) people are around you, but not with you.<sup>1</sup>

**At Good Grief, we know loneliness and isolation are significant challenges for those who are grieving a loss.** Whether you are experiencing isolation due to grief or not, there are effective ways you can reduce feelings of loneliness.

## 1. NAME IT

Don't hold it in! [Labeling emotions](#) is an effective way to reduce and regulate particularly difficult emotions. In fact, those who try to suppress their emotions tend to experience fewer positive emotions. [By naming your feelings](#), you take more control and realize your ability to 'do' something about them.

## 2. SEEK OUT REGULAR SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Sometimes we may expect others to 'take the initiative' and reach out, but if you are feeling lonely, the best thing you can do is be proactive and seek out connections with others. If you are stuck at home...because of say a pandemic...you can still connect to others via phone, video chat, or with an old-fashioned letter! Those who have regular interactions with others are [less likely](#) to experience feelings of loneliness and isolation. Thank goodness for technology!

## 3. GET PHYSICAL

Feelings of isolation and loneliness are connected to physical and mental wellbeing. Cycles or long-stretches of loneliness often cause us to turn inward and decrease healthy activities. Set small, measurable goals to stay active by walking, biking, running, yoga, or any other activity that will increase heartrate. Who knew that a jumping-jack can help break a rut?!



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## 4. BALANCE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND SCREEN TIME

Technology has the benefit of connecting people like never before. There is a [correlation](#) between the time spent on social media and perceived social isolation. The [general consensus of many mental health professionals](#) is that it is wise to *balance* how much time is spent online with other social interactions. It is important to form in-person bonds with people. If you are quarantined, use a video chat instead of Instagram or YouTube.

## 5. PLAN DIVERSE DAILY ACTIVITIES

Get outside, bake, play board games, do a puzzle, read a novel, or watch a favorite TV show. There are many, many things that you can do to fill your day, [even if you are stuck at home](#). By engaging in a variety of activities, it will help make your day feel fuller and less isolating.

## 6. FOCUS ON CONNECTION

Perhaps the most significant takeaway from the Cigna study is that even when people have others around them, they do not always feel that others are truly 'with' them. This idea of being fully 'with' someone is about the *depth and intimacy*. You can deepen relationships and increase intimacy by focusing on connection rather than a list of 'to-dos' such as work, homework, and chores. Expand and deepen interaction and dialogue by engaging in activities together that are solely focused on connecting.

## 7. CREATE A STRUCTURE TO YOUR DAY

Being at home with your routine broken can feel disorienting. Make a plan for your day first thing in the morning or the night before. Even though your routine is disrupted, you can take control over your goals for the day, including when to call a friend or check-in with a neighbor.

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1. [U.S. Loneliness Index Report, Cigna, 2018](#)