Managing loneliness
during the pandemic

Sangath

Loneliness is not a feeling but it's an experience that includes emotions, thoughts and feelings. Loneliness is painful and distressing and consequently, those experiencing this distress do not select or enjoy being lonely. The perception of loneliness is subjective and we all can experience it in different ways.

During the pandemic, many of us may have felt lonely due to the lockdown, social distancing, work from home and so on. However, the longer the pandemic goes on, the more these feelings become long-term. Studies in the US and the UK have shown an increased number of people feeling loneliness and with greater intensity than before. Long-term loneliness is associated with an increased risk of certain mental health problems, including depression, anxiety and stress. Loneliness can even affect your physical health, and

increase the likelihood of substance abuse. The impact of long-term loneliness on mental health can be very hard to manage.

Some ways to cope with loneliness

1. Maintain a schedule: Having a schedule and keeping busy are key to managing feelings of loneliness. At the start of each day plan a few things you will do and also keep a diary to note down who you are feeling daily.

2. Be active: We sometimes forget that our physical and mental health are delicately intertwined. If you spend weeks of isolation not getting any exercise, this will have a detrimental effect on your ability to manage your mental health. Therefore it is important to get exercise, spend time in nature and keep yourself active.

3. Do things that you enjoy: Finding ways to give yourself joy even when you are feeling lonely can help to improve your mental health. Engage in your hobbies, learn a new skill, be creative, read books, watch TV/Movies, listen to music etc.

4. Stay connected to others: Perhaps the best thing you can do to combat loneliness during this period of isolation is to connect with others in non-traditional ways. Call up friends or family and speak about your day, play some virtual games, watch movies together etc.

5. Share your feelings, but do not compare: Sharing our feelings with someone close to us, can help with feeling less isolated. However, avoid comparing your life with others' on social media, as this may make you feel lonelier.

6. Loneliness may be contagious, but so is happiness: Studies show that individuals who are lonely often are close to others who experience similar feelings. One way to break this cycle is to interact with others, in whatever way we can. Checking in with loved ones will abate loneliness two-fold, and thereby break the chain.

7. Seek professional support: If you feel like you require more support feel free to join our listening circles or tele-counselling services. Also, go through the list of service providers on our webpage.

Remember, most of us at some point or the other during the pandemic have felt cut off form those we are close to. You are not alone.