

United We Stand
#WellbeingWarriors

Compiled by Nico Venter and Dr Refiloe Seane
(Student Counselling & Development)

Due to social distancing rules and the current period of national lockdown, it is very likely that you may be feeling isolated at times. This feeling of isolation is more difficult for some people than for others, and may even lead to you experiencing some unpleasant feelings at times, such as sadness; anxiety; and even frustration.

Social support is an important contributor to maintaining your mental wellbeing, as it:

- provides you with a sense of belonging (which is one of our basic human needs);
- creates a space where you can comfortably express your feelings;
- helps you understand that you are not alone or weird in your feelings and experiences.

Although things are out of the ordinary now and our physical movement is restricted, we can still access social support through technology. Use the resources available to you and try reaching out to people, rather than waiting for someone to check in on you first.

Quote by Brené Brown: "I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgement; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship."

Below are some specific ways in which technology and social support can be combined during lockdown, in order to beat the feeling of isolation:

A connected mindset

Connect with your family and friends by going online. Things like Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp can instantly connect you to others. However, make sure that you use social media to improve your mental health, and be careful not to let it make you feel even worse. Connect with people who are supportive and uplifting, and unfollow or block people who continuously post things that upset you.

Remain optimistic

Search for uplifting and inspirational articles, books, recipes, exercise tips, and humorous videos and share them with your friends and family. There are many uplifting people and pages to [follow](#) on the internet. Also try to focus on things you are grateful for in your life.

Gather the troops

Get your friends together and be each other's 'accountability buddies'. Check in on each other daily to see if you are all sticking to your goals, maintaining your daily routines and study schedules, and exercising on a regular basis (there are many [free](#) exercise [videos](#) on YouTube).

Practise kindness & compassion

Remember that your friends, family and fellow community members are most probably also struggling during the lockdown. Helping others can increase your sense of purpose and value. A message of encouragement or helping the elderly are some examples of kindness.

By thinking differently about what social connection and social support means, and using the tips above, you may be physically isolated, but still emotionally connected.