

Dealing with Social Isolation

Typical reactions to being Sheltered in Place:

- Fear and worry about your own safety and that of your loved ones from whom you may be temporarily separated.
- Concern about being able to effectively care for children or others in your care.
- Uncertainty, anger, or frustration about how long you will need to remain sheltered, and uncertainty about what is going to happen.
- Depression and hopelessness; from mild to severe, ongoing or periodic.

In long term shelter in place situations, you may also experience:

- Feelings of isolation, loneliness, sadness or boredom.
- Guilt about not being able to perform normal work or parenting duties.
- Fear over loss of income.
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns.
- Confusion about the presence of God during these difficult times.
- Anxiously anticipating the worst-case scenarios, writing out a script of events in your thoughts.

Ways to cope during Shelter in Place:

- Get clear on the facts. Stay up to date but avoid watching or checking news reports 24/7.
- Remember that children are especially sensitive to and affected by what's on TV. They need their parents to protect and guide them in a healthy, sensible way.
- Find a few credible sources for information and avoid conspiracy theories and myths.

Help reduce tension and anxiety:

- Relax your body by doing things that you know work for you. Deep breathing, stretching, walking if you can do it safely within the distancing guidelines, and engage in pleasurable hobbies.
- Deep breathing actually helps introduce helpful chemicals and reduces stress chemicals in your brain and body. When we worry excessively there's usually a buildup of epinephrine (think adrenalin) in our muscles. This increases the stress levels in our bodies and interferes with sleep. Using the large motor muscles burns this adrenalin up.
- Read material that grabs and keeps your attention. It shouldn't be a topic you have to work to concentrate on. Instead read something that takes you to a different place. It should not be related to the current pandemic situation.
- Music is proven to have a calming, soothing affect. Find a type of music that does it for you. Perhaps Bach's 5th?
- Pray continuously (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18), but avoid praying for the immediate concerns about coronavirus too much- that will increase stress. Instead pray for others needs, different concerns, and add praise and worship.
- Consider starting your day with thanking God for 7 things you are grateful for. Write them in a journal so you can read and re-read. This practice is empirically proven to improve mental and emotional health.
- If you have trouble sleeping, don't stay in bed and wrestle with worry. Get up, go to another room, read something that calms you and is unrelated to the worry topic. Once you're back in bed try a technique taught in the Navy: count backwards slowly from a high number. For example, start with 440 and slowly count backwards. It takes concentration because it's not how we usually count. Also, why we don't count forward, we could do that automatically and still worry!

Stay connected:

Staying connected with family, friends, neighbors and co-workers and others you trust is one of the most helpful ways to cope with any stressful situation. We were not built to do life alone!

- Because of advances in technology, it's possible to connect with others during a shelter in place situation. You can use FaceTime, Skype, Zoom or Google Hangout Meets. If you need help using this technology, call or email Shoreline and we will assist you.
- Text loved ones or friends regularly.
- If you're inclined, carefully check Facebook and Twitter to see what's going on out there. If you choose to do that be sure sources you follow are credible.

- Serve-it's good for you! It's a great way to get out of your own head and help others at the same time. You'll get a sense of meaning and purpose in helping. God calls us to it in Scripture and there are countless reasons why.

Fitness and eating:

Sheltering in place has shown over the last few weeks to lead to binge eating and constant snacking for many people. Along with inability to do usual fitness routines, we have a recipe for a decline in physical health and unwanted weight gain.

- Set a time for breakfast (i.e. 8:00am) and stick to it. Same with lunch and dinner.
- Structure is important to regulation. For many of us, yes me included, food is a form of self-medication and can quickly get out of control or build a new bad habit.
- Don't ever put tasty food in front of you then try and resist eating it! Research is clear that 95% of people will fail the test. Instead, set the time and plan the food you'll eat and stick to it. Have a friend or family member help by encouraging, without negativity.
- Home fitness can work by doing old school calisthenics; jumping jacks, sit ups, stretch bands, push-ups, and light weights. There are many home workouts to tap in to on Youtube as well. Find one that's do-able and bite size to start. Don't commit yourself to a huge new, taxing work out if that hasn't been your norm. Odds are you'll get discouraged and quit, adding to frustration with the whole scenario. Go light and easy to build success.

Relationship tips:

Under the constant stress of sheltering in place, couples, friends and family can get snippy and snarky. Small things gain size,, small fires can get hot fast. Try these tips:

- Change React to Respond. When triggered, do an old school count to 10 (there's reason behind this old folk prescription) to slow yourself down and breathe. If necessary, get away (detach) briefly to gather yourself and choose a response, rather than letting the first thing fly.
- Practice listening. This is important for adult relationships and especially for parent/child relationships. The quickest and easiest thing to do is direct, teach, order, and control. These are attempts to reign in the frustration and may be present normally but will often be exacerbated while sheltered in place.
- Listening means, while another person is speaking or communicating in any other way, YOU are listening and NOT thinking about what you're going to say when they stop talking. This may involve concentration and effort, and even good listeners can improve.
- Detaching is when you take a quick break from an interaction to gather yourself and get back to reasonable, calmer responding. Find the one thing you can do to detach,

and tell the other you'll be back when you're in better shape to respond. It will save you and everyone around you grief.

- Try new things for enjoyment, make sure there's laughter in your relationship and home. Fun is refreshing and renewing. Inject it into your activities in appropriate doses with proper timing.

Spiritual direction:

- Prayer. It's important to not allow your prayers to become primarily "one issue" prayers. When we identify a single situation we want God to address, our sense of his engagement narrows to whether or not the issue is rectified.
- Instead, pray to God as though you are talking with a friend who was visiting and around you a lot. Use ongoing conversation, sharing, asking, praising, and being open and honest with him.

Pray the Psalms...

How do we pray the Psalms? First read the verse/s, then speak to the Lord from the content of the verse. An example would be, you read "The Lord is my shepherd" then pray something like this, "Lord, thank you for being my shepherd. Help me to be a good shepherd, and as you guide and protect me, help be that same way with those in my care..." You put yourself into the Psalm and pray it's words from your heart to God.

- 4:8 "In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety."
- 5:11-12, "But let all who take refuge in you be glad; Let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you."
- 16: 8-11, "I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."
- Psalm 23
- 27:14, "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."
- 34:17-18, "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

- More to read and pray: 40:1-2, 46:1-3, 55:22, 56:3-4, 61:1-2, 77:11-12, 86:15-16, 91:2-4.
- Ask others to pray for you consistently and check in with them.
- Check in with those you're praying for and keep the prayers flowing!
- Read the Bible daily, perhaps using the Shoreline reading plan. Join one of the many Bible studies offered online on the Shoreline website.