

Like hunger or thirst, if loneliness is left unresolved, it can have serious consequences, and the fix is far from straightforward. Just being with other people, will not necessarily make you feel less alone.

Sustained loneliness activates an avoidance mechanism in the brain, meaning that you are more likely to be sceptical and distrustful of others, which makes you withdraw even further. Loneliness doesn't only play tricks on the mind, it can also take a serious toll on our physical health: Even in a pandemic-free world, chronic loneliness increases the risk of an early death by 26%.

### **Questions and Answers to cope with our sanity in this lockdown phase:**

Question 1:

I stay alone and have no pets and no one to converse with at home. How am I going to make sure I survive during this period of the lockdown phase?

Answer:

Establish a time with a good friend or family member that you can call and chat to daily.

Question 2:

What happens if I get bored during the lockdown phase?

Answer:

To avoid getting bored during the lockdown phase set daily tasks for yourself and complete the task. Try and engage in online courses or learn something you have always wanted to learn. For example, there are online videos on how to do the waltz or cha-cha or how to cook a chicken alfredo.

Question 3:

How do I remain fit and healthy if I can't go to the gym?

Answer:

There are plenty of online videos which details different exercises which can be done in the comfort of your own home. Drink plenty of water and make sure you get enough sleep.

Question 4:

Should I be following social media during the lockdown phase?

Answer:

It is better to follow a news website that gives you accurate news to make sure you are up to date with what is happening in the world around you. Avoid listening reading tweets and Facebook posts which just exacerbate your anxiety.

Question 5:

How can I maintain a proper work schedule as I am not going to work?

Answer:

When you at work all your tasks for the day are documented on your calendar. Try to follow the same approach. Add your daily tasks to your calendar. Make sure you treat as a workday to avoid anxiety because of incomplete tasks.

Question 6:

What can I do if I am feeling lonely?

Answer:

Loneliness is a normal human emotion; it is simply a sign of wanting contact with people. It is not a personal failing and it's important not to blame yourself for feeling this way. There are things that we can all do ourselves to help manage it.

Some people recommend meditation, or practising something known as 'mindfulness' (a technique that helps people to change the way they think and feel about their experiences, especially stressful experiences, and is recommended as a treatment for some people with mental health problems including stress, anxiety, and depression) can help.

Question 7:

How do I make sure I don't get annoyed or irritated with my children/parents/partner during this lockdown phase?

Answer:

"Cabin Fever" is very common especially if several individuals are confined to the same quarters. Try to ensure that every individual has their own space, whether it is watching tv or listening to music or meditation. Ensure that you can do fun activities together during this period. If you have a garden take a walk and enjoy nature.

Question 8:

What if my children get bored and frustrated at being at home?

Answer:

If you have young children, ask them what they liked or disliked about yesterday, and suggest ideas for today. If you have older children, share the list with them and help them plan their day.

Question 9:

What happens if I have a friend/partner that suffers with anxiety, OCD or mental illness?

Answer:

As much as this is scary for a normal person it is 10 times worse for those that experience mental disabilities. Reach out, give her or him special attention. Call, Skype, Zoom or FaceTime regularly.

Question 10:

What can I do to help during this lockdown phase?

Answer:

Most people feel helpless during this lockdown period. The most we can do is ensure we follow the rules and regulations and stay indoors to ensure that the virus does not spread. We can also donate to the various organisations to help them fund the medical supplies needed by the doctors and nurses.

Question 11:

How can I ensure I remain sane during this lockdown phase?

Answer:

Try not to think of the negative of the lockdown but more about the positives. Ensure you retain your daily routine even though you are limited and confined to your home space. Have gratitude sessions with your family. Everyone in your family can explain what they are grateful for.

Question 12:

What if I feel ill during this lockdown?

Answer:

All medical intuitions will be open. Please make sure you proceed to your nearest medical centre.

Question 13:

What if this lockdown lasts more than 21 days?

Answer:

People tend to fear the unknown or uncertainty of the future. The fact is we don't know what the future holds. Try not to focus too much on the future and focus more on the present and daily tasks you are doing.

Question 14:

Will we ever beat the virus and get back to our normal lifestyles?

Answer:

Don't forget that we are a resilient bunch. We have a built-in bias to expect and anticipate the worst. Amazingly enough, humans are survivors. We will survive this the same as we have survived plagues and wars. Life will go back to normal for some of us, for some of us it will never be the same, but life will go on. We will tend to overestimate a threat, especially if it is unknown. Try limiting what you watch on the news. There is a balance between being informed and being over-informed.

Question 15:

How will I adjust to life after the lockdown?

Answer:

Think of the lockdown as an unexpected break and time to self-reflect. After every long holiday that we ever had in our lives we always got back to our normal daily lives. Make sure that during this period you don't fall into the trap of laziness. That is why set up daily tasks during this period and complete them.