



# THE EAP CONNECTION

## Overcoming Loneliness and Strengthening Social Connections

Social distancing, working from home, and virtual schooling have changed the way that we are connecting with others. For many, the decreased social interactions have increased feelings of loneliness. Humans are social beings and connection is important for our health and well-being. While it's normal to feel lonely at times, there are things you can do to overcome it.

### **Gain perspective.**

Your mindset and approach to dealing with loneliness can make a big difference on how you cope. Keep in mind that feeling lonely and being alone are two different things. Identify people in your support network who you can reach out to when you feel lonely. Engaging in positive self-talk can also help you gain perspective on the situation and make the best out of it.

### **Schedule time daily to connect with people.**

If you are someone who needs regular communication and connection with people, it is important to make it a priority to schedule interaction time. Take advantage of free video chatting options, such as Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime, or simply reaching out by phone. Be creative with how you connect. Invite a friend or family member to meet you for a virtual lunch or dinner; plan a virtual game night with a suitable game or an app, such as Houseparty; or start a virtual book club. If you can meet in person in a way that feels comfortable with social distancing, take advantage of the fall weather to go for walks or coffee on a patio.

### **Expand your connections.**

Take the opportunity to reach out to old friends that perhaps you have not stayed in close contact with, talk to a neighbor, or build a new relationship with a coworker. You might even try joining a virtual club or group. There are many people feeling isolated who would enjoy and appreciate your connection.

### **Get outside.**

Especially for those who are working from home, it can feel great to get outside of your four walls for a bit. Going for a walk or run is a great option and has many additional health benefits. Even being in places where there are other people, such as the grocery store, can have a positive impact when you are feeling lonely.

### **Structure your time.**

Evenings tend to be the time when loneliness is most challenging. Structure your evenings with activities that you enjoy, connect with support people by video or phone, and make time for self-care! If you have a companion animal, playing with them can also be helpful for easing loneliness.

Remember to be patient and kind to yourself, especially during difficult times. If you are struggling with feeling lonely, reach out to an EAP counselor at ERC: Counselors & Consultants for support.

## HOW TO USE YOUR EAP BENEFIT:

ERC: Counselors & Consultants is your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) partner. For additional information, visit our website [ERCincorp.com](http://ERCincorp.com) or call 1-800-222-8590.