

May 2020



Prevention Prism 3

Desperately searching for a brain break, and maybe even some accidental entertainment, I found myself randomly scrolling the walls of social media. To my surprise, a painting by a classmate caught my eye. As I gazed at the picture, I admired the colors but was drawn to the familiar “look” the painting possessed. Even though this was a personal expression of the artist, Jennifer Allshouse, I couldn’t help but notice the reflection on the painting was similar to my own. That’s when I observed the title of this piece, “isolation: a self-portrait.”



We can’t talk about the Coronavirus without talking about isolation and its effects on teens and adults. Many teens are feeling the weight of social distancing and the mandated stay-at-home order. Teens are also feeling various emotions behind the uncertainty of their future; will I graduate? What about Prom? Since sports are cancelled, does that mean no Scouts? And maybe even a question only asked in their heads... Am I strong enough to handle this? Teens are upset, frustrated, and flat-out bored. It’s extremely important during this time to really focus on supervision and access. Feeling isolated can lead to depression, and depression can lead to suicide (<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>).

Keeping a watchful eye on our loved ones is just as important as keeping a watchful eye on ourselves. Professional help is still available during this time of social distancing and primary care physicians and therapists are still treating patients. Try not to be too alarmed if your provider is using video visits as an alternative to face-to-face communication. Parents and kids, alongside teachers and students, need to support each other. We all need a positive person or mechanism that can help us focus on encouraging thoughts and actions when our negative thoughts have the potential to become amplified during this time of solitude. Here are a few useful tools I gathered to help cope with stress during this crisis:

- **Take Breaks:** Please take breaks from the day-to-day monotony of adjusting to Covid-19.
- **Unplug:** Unplug yourself from the TV, radio, and reading stories of the pandemic. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting and stressful.
- **Care:** Take care of your body by stretching, meditating, and taking deep breaths throughout the day.
- **Unwind:** Try to unwind by doing an activity you enjoy. Play a board game, knit a sweater, or attempt to paint your version of “isolation: a self-portrait.”
- **Check in:** Connect with your loved ones. Call, email, text, video chat, and if you’re feeling nostalgic, mail a handwritten letter (There is still some magic left in letters marked with a postage stamp).

Be compassionate when you speak with your loved ones and students. Validate their feelings, even if they are upset. Offer support and be present. You are doing a great job! I am so proud to share this journey with you.

See you next week!

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