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## How to overcome COVID-19 isolation - from an EDA Italia project ([www.edaitalia.org](http://www.edaitalia.org))

Translation into English by Anton Grech (Valletta, Malta)

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## Depression and anxiety: neither infectious nor incurable

### *Coronavirus and social isolation: how not to get depressed!*

#### Social relationships

Socialization is very important for humans. Unfortunately in times of epidemic from Covid-19, socialization was necessarily limited.

**#Istayhome** is a government decree to take care the health of population.

A recent scientific publication highlights that social relationships are important for human health and longevity. ("*Why Social Relationships Are Important for Physical Health: A Systems Approach to Understanding and Modifying Risk and Protection*". Holt-Lunstad J, published on PubMed in the year 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29035688>).

Another study points out that prolonged social isolation can induce stable changes in human and animal behaviour. ("*The Neuropeptide Tac2 Controls a Distributed Brain State Induced by Chronic Social Isolation Stress*", Moriel Zelikowsky, published on Cell.com volume 173 n°5 il 17/5/2018, [https://www.cell.com/fulltext/S0092-8674\(18\)30361-1](https://www.cell.com/fulltext/S0092-8674(18)30361-1) ).

#### Does isolation increase depression and anxiety?

Those who are in solitary confinement for quarantine in hospital or at home, have an additional psychological and social difficulty. The scientific research "*The psychological impact of quarantine and how*

to reduce it: rapid review of the evidence" (published on The Lancet, on 14.3.2020, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140673620304608> ), by King's College of London scientists, notes that the psychological difficulties of quarantine can last a long time and provides guidance to alleviate them, especially with regard to the information to be given and the duration of isolation. The researchers state that **'The study showed a wide range of psychological impacts of quarantine, including symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, feelings of anger, fear and substance abuse'**.

In addition, those who are forced to live in an aggressive and violent family climate obviously need further help. Fortunately, the need for social isolation is only for preventive health needs and is temporary.

### What to do during isolation

One of the major reasons for being unhappy is that of always wanting everything you don't have and of not giving value to what you own.

Before, we had an unbridled and stressful life and wanted a moment of peace. Now that we are all at home, we lack active life and freedom in interpersonal relationships.

We complained about chaotic, crowded and smog-filled cities, now we are afraid of the desolation of seeing them empty and we do not remember that the air is fresh sparkling and clean thanks to the minimal movement of vehicles.

We complained about the city's noise pollution and now we are afraid of the deafening silence.

We complained that we did not see our children grow up, or that they are always away from home, but now we have the pleasure of enjoying their company.

*The epidemic and isolation made us appreciate what we had and led us to reflect on the real values of our existence and psychophysical health. Stages of depression, anxiety, fear, induced by the presence of the coronavirus can and should be overcome!*

### Short Vade-mecum

- 1) Accept and share rules, understanding their importance
- 2) Look at the glass half full and think positively (in every impediment there is a benefit)
- 3) Positively enhance what you have and you will be happy
- 4) Take care of your person; eat healthy and regularly taking high fiber and vitamin C foods; drink at least 1 litre and a half of water a day; sleep the hours you need for your well-being (at least 7 hours a night); wash frequently your hands, not neglecting the hygiene and care of the body; don't neglect yourself by staying in your pajamas; make done-by-yourself beauty treatments; do home physical activity, take care of the home and heal the spirit with meditation, yoga, prayers.
- 5) Don't isolate yourself: social media is also very helpful for this
- 6) Appreciate the company of your cohabitants and yourself
- 7) Cultivate positive and interactive pastimes, listen to music, read pleasant books: be creative and express the artist who is in you
- 8) Ride the tiger of emotions, don't object and learn how to manage it: the emotions color life
- 9) Make yourself useful and benevolent towards others
- 10) If you need help : ask your psychiatrist or your reference psychologist for help
- 11) Play with your children, calm them down and help them to respect the new rules