

# Keeping the “Social” in Social Distancing During COVID-19

*By Nizete-Ly Valles, PhD, Member Fort Bend County Mental Health Task Force*

## What is the risk?

- ✚ The CDC and the WHO recommend that we do our part to slow the spread of COVID-19 by:
  - Engaging in proper hand hygiene and disinfecting surfaces often
  - Wearing masks in public and avoiding touching our face
  - Staying home if possible
- ✚ However, staying home means we have had to distance ourselves from extended family and friends, which can lead to social isolation
- ✚ Prolonged social isolation and loneliness have been associated with:
  - Depression and anxiety
  - Distress
  - Medical problems
  - Substance use/abuse
  - A rise in domestic violence
  - Thoughts of death and suicide

## What we can do:

- Stay connected with others even if you do not “feel” like it
  - Remember it is about “**distantly socializing**” not social distancing!
  - Plan virtual get-togethers, have virtual game nights, coordinate virtual book clubs, etc.
  - Talk, text, email, FaceTime/Zoom/Skype with friends and family
- Stay active (i.e., indoor and/or outdoor exercises)
- Try to stick to your regular mealtimes and sleep schedule when possible
- Focus on things within your control (e.g., hand hygiene, socializing, acts of kindness, etc.)
- Find meaning during this difficult time
  - Safely get involved in your community (e.g., check-in on older adults, donate)
  - Foster a pet from a shelter
- Stay informed but limit how much news you are watching
- Engage in self-care (e.g., arts/crafts, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, journaling, attend virtual religious services, etc.)
  - Remember to take care of you so that you can take care of others!

## Resources:

- For questions regarding your **mental health** needs please call: **281-238-3079** or visit [www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/bh](http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/bh)
- For a list of resources available in Fort Bend, please visit: <https://www.sugarlandtx.gov/DocumentCenter/View/23964/COVID-Resources-for-FB-County-4720?bidId=>
- For information about **Alcoholics Anonymous** meetings in Fort Bend county visit: <https://aahouston.org/locations/fort-bend-club/>
- From the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
- For information on suicide prevention, please visit: <https://texassuicideprevention.org/>
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: **1-800-273-8255**
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: <https://www.thehotline.org/> or call **1-800-799-7233**