

Coping with Isolation – For Temporary Foreign Workers

While physical distancing helps slow the spread of COVID-19, the effects of isolation can negatively impact our mental health. Now more than ever, it is essential for all of us to emotionally support each other while abiding by the distancing measures recommended by public health.

Self-isolation can at times be needed to prevent the spread of a virus. Unfortunately, this can worsen feelings of loneliness or abandonment. People placed in self-isolation may experience a wide range of feelings, including relief, fear, anger, sadness, irritability, guilt or confusion. They may find it hard to sleep. Humans are social creatures and need connection to others to thrive, which can make isolation challenging. For Temporary Foreign Workers there are unique sources of stress which can include being in a foreign country far away from home, family and friends, dealing with language and culture barriers, travelling during a pandemic and only having access to the limited belongings they were able to bring with them.

Dealing with isolation

The following suggestions may help you through this challenging time:

Keep busy

- Create and stick to a schedule for leisure, chores, meals, physical activity and sleep.
- Do things that you normally love to do (e.g., reading, listening to music).

Stay Connected

- Think of ways to stay connected to other people – by videoconference, phone, chat, text, or writing letters.
- Talk to others and share how you are feeling.
- Ask for help when you're feeling overwhelmed.

Take Care of Yourself

- As much as is possible, eat healthy meals and drink lots of water.
- Stay physically active: go online to find exercises you can do at home with no equipment.
- Practise relaxation or meditation.
- Try to get plenty of sleep.
- Focus on the positive aspects of your life and things you can control.
- Be cautious of excessive intake of alcohol or other substances.
- Be kind and compassionate to yourself and others

Prepare ahead

- Plan ahead with your employer to ensure you will have what you need to deal with self-isolation.

- If there are activities or items that you usually find helpful in times of stress, bring the necessary things with you if possible.
- Ensure that you are aware of how to seek help from your employer should you begin to struggle with coping with self-isolation.