Social Isolation:
A Communal Health Issue and the Impact on Mental Health Handout

Social isolation defined: Social isolation is the lack of social contacts and having few people to interact with regularly. An individual can live alone and not feel lonely or socially isolated, just as someone can feel lonely while being with other people. (Kroll, 2022)

Impact of COVID-19/pandemic:
Widespread; 1 in 3 (Older adults) impacted

Impact:
> * Physical health; mental health; quality of life; longevity
> * Recognized as a public health problem priority
> * Social isolation = # of interactions

Greater social connection is associated with 50% lower odds of early death

Three types of empathy:
1. Emotional - I share your feelings
2. Cognitive - I understand your experience
3. Applied - My understanding of your experience drives me to act

Social isolation & Empathy ~ Impact:

A. **Empathy** = ability to share the emotional state of another individual 👭

B. Positive **empathy** = emotion regulator green 💚 😐 💔 😑

C. Decreases loneliness ⬇️

D. Positive impact on frontal lobe 🧠

Identify the role of empathy and two of its impacts on social isolation amongst individuals and communities

> - Increase in empathy = decrease in loneliness and social isolation
> - Individuals positively impacted by increase in empathy
> - Communities thrive with increase in empathy and individuals less socially isolated

Benefits of support for those experiencing social isolation:

1. Social connection
2. Understanding one's mental health needs/supporting mental health connection
3. Prioritizing support - Who can I ask to support me?
4. Play
5. Offer support to others
6. Empathy
7. Time to embrace nature

REMEMBER THE FOLLOWING:

1. **Not all stress is bad stress.** Some stress is good stress. Stress can be motivating.

2. You must **be aware of your stress** in order to come up with a plan of how to attack your stress.

3. **Do <u>not</u> isolate yourself from others when you become stressed.** Temporary isolation may allow you to come to terms with your stress and come up with a plan of attack. However, long term isolation can lead to feelings of hopelessness and depression.

4. **Take care of yourself and practice self-care.** Guilt can creep in and cause you to feel guilty for taking care of yourself during a stressful season. Do it anyway!

5. **Ask for help!** If you are stuck in a stressful situation, and do not feel like you can conquer it alone, call for backup. (Ex. trusted friend, family member, coworker, neighbor, or professional). Use local community crisis resources to connect with a professional immediately.

"You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive."

— James Baldwin

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