The Mental Health Toll of the Coronavirus Epidemic

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Around the world, governments and health experts are scrambling to limit the spread of the coronavirus. Urgent public awareness campaigns are being used to inform the public of the severity of COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus. Social distancing measures — some voluntary, some imposed — have been put in place in countries around the globe.

These drastic steps are necessary to avoid potentially millions of deaths globally over the next few months. The ultimate concern is the health and well-being of those who are vulnerable to the virus. But pursuing these measures could bring about a less obvious, but still significant, threat to the mental health of people who may themselves never become infected.

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What's next

Mental health experts say there are ways to combat the psychological toll of the coronavirus pandemic. The most common advice includes avoiding sensationalist news coverage, interacting with people over the phone or internet, getting outdoors while avoiding close contact and making digital appointments with mental health professionals.

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Humans need social interaction just as they need food or water

"If we think about loneliness as this adaptive response kind of like hunger and thirst, it's this unpleasant state that motivates us to seek out social connections just like hunger motivates us to seek out food." — Psychologist Julianne Holt-Lunstad to Business Insider