

# The Psychology of Why You Go Stir-Crazy, and How to Cope

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Humans don't just like to be social, we need to be.

In fact, people who have weaker social relationships are 50% more likely to die over a given period than those with more robust connections, according to a 2015 [meta-analysis](#) including more than 308,000 people.

Put another way, [being lonely seems to be as deadly as smoking 15 cigarettes a day](#).

That's why depriving yourself of social connections, even temporarily, doesn't feel good: Your body is trying to tell you to mingle so that, long-term, you stay alive.

"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," lead study author Julianne Holt-Lunstad, a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Brigham Young University, told Business Insider.

Of course, she said, in a situation like a pandemic that [requires you to reduce or eliminate your face-to-face contact](#), that discomfort needs to be endured to stave off more dangerous, immediate effects.

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**To mentally and emotionally cope with a quarantine or reduced social contact, virtually reach out to others.**

Being quarantined today is less socially straining than just a decade ago.

Tools like FaceTime and Skype "may help relieve some of those short-term unpleasant responses to help us still feel and maintain those connections without potentially putting ourselves at risk of being exposed to the virus," Holt-Lunstad said.

She recommended being proactive about reaching out to others and asking how they're doing — you'll [boost your mental health](#) as well as theirs, since they'll at least experience the perception of support, which research shows can [reduce stress](#).

Holt-Lunstad added that the silver lining to something like a directive to stay home is the ability to slow down and connect with the people closest to us.

"When you're having people still express love and support in a variety of ways, it can make those periods of relative confinement more bearable," she said.