

By now, we have all seen the extent in which our lives have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. While physical health is an area of concern for many, we must not lose sight of the mental toll these tempestuous times have thrust upon our everyday lives. The weight of losing or caring for loved ones, job insecurity, economic hardship, and unprecedented social safeguards have the potential to wear down even the most resilient of us. We need to be aware of those that have experienced mental health issues prior to the pandemic, as suffering could intensify during our current circumstances. The concerns raised above could cause feelings of depression, loneliness, and hopelessness to deepen. Depression is one of the leading causes of suicide attempts across all ages. Mental or addictive disorders are associated with 90% of suicides. In 2018, the most recent figures available, over 48,000 Americans died to suicide. Depression can be exhibited in [many different ways](#) and we should be cognizant of those exhibiting several signs for an extended period of time.

There are ways that we can combat these feelings and connect with those that we love. If you have been seeing a mental health professional, be sure to reach out to see if there are avenues to continue treatment. This may come in the form of telephonic communication or face-to-face contact through various online mediums (Facetime, Zoom, etc.). Limit the amount of time devoted to watching news or consuming content on social media. Exposure to copious amounts of negative information can be detrimental to your well-being. Attempt to maintain some form of physical activity, either within your home or outside while practicing safe habits. Connect with family, friends, and loved ones throughout the day. This is an ideal time to get in touch with those who you may not have spoken to in quite a while. Phone calls and video conferencing are great ways to allow yourself social

connectedness without physical proximity. As humans, it is completely normal to experience a wide range of emotions, but we want to make sure that we do so in a healthy manner.

There are resources for help that should be utilized if you are experiencing problems. Utilization of telehealth and telephonic communication with our healthcare professionals will be of the utmost importance in a time where isolation is being recommended. Be sure to research what is available through your insurance or EAP providers. If you or someone you love is struggling with depression or thinking about suicide, get help now. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), is a free resource that is available 24 hours a day for anyone who is in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. The Crisis Text Line is a free 24/7 text line where trained crisis counselors support individuals in crisis. Text "Jason" to 741741 to speak with a compassionate, trained Crisis Counselor. Confidential support 24/7, for free.

The Jason Foundation is another resource available. The Jason Foundation is dedicated to the awareness and prevention of youth suicide through educational programs that equip youth, parents, educators, and the community with the tools and resources to identify and assist at-risk youth. Many times, a young person will exhibit clear warning signs prior to an attempt. By knowing the warning signs, and knowing how to help, you could save a life. Visit The Jason Foundation's website to learn more about youth suicide, the warning signs, and how you can help make a difference. The Jason Foundation has never charged a school, community, or individual for the use of their programs or resources. www.jasonfoundation.com