Social Distancing Prevents Infections, But It Can Have Unintended Consequences

March 20, 2020
News Type: Weekly Spark, Weekly Spark News

Science Magazine[1]

The social distancing needed to address the coronavirus pandemic does not come naturally to human beings. “The coronavirus . . . is calling on us to suppress our profoundly human and evolutionarily hard-wired impulses for connection: seeing our friends, getting together in groups, or touching each other,” says Nicholas Christakis, a social scientist and physician at Yale University. Isolation can increase the risk for health problems such as depression and heart disease, and social contact can lessen the negative impact of stress. Older adults tend to be more vulnerable due to factors such as loss of family and friends and chronic illness. Phone, texting, email, and apps like Skype can help people stay in contact, but they don’t fully take the place of in-person connection. Nevertheless, using these technologies is still very valuable, including to check on how other people are doing and offer support. According to Julianne Holt-Lunstad, a Brigham Young University research psychologist, providing support can be even more helpful than receiving it and can enable us to feel more connected.

Spark Extra! Check out information on the value of social connectedness[2] and how to promote it.

Links within this resource

Printed on 12/20/2020 from https://sprc.org/news/social-distancing-prevents-infections-it-can-have-unintended-consequences