

Emotion Regulation and Mental Resilience in Times of Social Disconnection

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DESCRIPTION

Whether resulting from life transitions, physical distancing, or unavoidable situational factors, poses a significant threat to psychological well-being, making emotion regulation a major factor in determining whether individuals experience distress or resilience during periods of separation. Emotion regulation strategies refer to the conscious or unconscious methods people use to manage their emotional experiences, influencing which emotions arise, intensely they are felt and they were expressed. Since human beings are inherently social creatures who evolved within interconnected groups that provided emotional buffering through reassurance, support and shared meaning, the loss of social ties-through relocation, bereavement, quarantine, or long-distance separation removes an important regulatory function.

Without external social support, individuals must rely more heavily on internal emotion-regulation processes such as cognitive reappraisal, suppression, mindfulness, behavioral activation, or modified social strategies like virtual communication and selective emotional sharing. Cognitive reappraisal, one of the most adaptive strategies, enables individuals to reinterpret isolation not as abandonment or loneliness but as an opportunity for personal growth, self-reflection and creative development, reducing negative emotions and promoting psychological control.

Strengthening well-being through awareness

Mindfulness and acceptance-based approaches offer another constructive pathway by encouraging people to observe their feelings-such as sadness or anxiety-without judgment or impulsive reaction, reducing rumination and catastrophic thinking that often escalate distress during isolation. Over time, this non-reactive stance fosters emotional resilience by allowing emotions to arise and pass without becoming overwhelming or identity-defining. In addition, behavioral activation and self-compassion play vital roles; engaging in meaningful activities such as art, writing, studying, exercise, or virtual volunteering helps generate positive emotions, strengthen a sense of purpose and provide structure, while self-compassion encourages individuals to treat themselves with kindness rather than self-

criticism during lonely periods. Establishing routines that incorporate self-care, creativity and physical movement can effectively counteract the inertia and diminished motivation that often accompany isolation.

Socially mediated coping

Meanwhile, socially mediated strategies, including digital communication, online communities and carefully curated social media interactions, provide partial alternatives to face-to-face contact and allow selective sharing of emotions with trusted individuals, thereby restoring a sense of belonging and alleviating emotional burdens even at a distance. However, emotion regulation strategies vary in effectiveness depending on the individual and the context. Suppression, for example, may provide short-term relief but often increases internal distress and strains relationships over time, whereas strategies like reappraisal and mindfulness remain consistently beneficial across situations. Factors including personality, cultural values, socioeconomic status and access to technology influence which strategies an individual may prefer or find effective.

Timing is also important in early isolation, acceptance and distraction may be more helpful, whereas in prolonged isolation, deeper coping strategies like reappraisal, meaningful engagement, or social reconnection prove more effective. For mental-health practitioners, these insights highlight the importance of incorporating emotion-regulation training into interventions for individuals lacking social support. Techniques such as mindfulness exercises, reappraisal coaching, behavioral activation planning and encouragement of safe digital social engagement can significantly boost resilience. At a community level, addressing social isolation as a public health concern requires investing in accessible remote support systems like tele-counseling and online peer networks, as well as improving digital literacy so individuals can maintain meaningful communication.

CONCLUSION

Researchers, meanwhile, must explore questions such as which combinations of emotion-regulation strategies best protect against chronic loneliness, cultural factors shape coping

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preferences and technology-mediated support both enhances and complicates emotional well-being. Ultimately, social isolation disrupts key emotional safeguards-shared routines, communal reassurance and interpersonal connection-making the ability to self-regulate emotions not only beneficial but essential. By employing strategies such as cognitive reappraisal,

mindful acceptance, behavioral activation, self-compassion and selective digital connection, individuals can maintain emotional balance and transform isolation into a period of resilience and even personal growth. Prioritizing these strategies at individual, clinical and societal levels offers a powerful pathway for mitigating loneliness and promoting psychological well-being..