

WELLNESS WEDNESDAY TIPS

Social Distancing and Relationship Stress

Social distancing has resulted in many of us spending extended time with roommates, partners, children, or parents. Things can feel disrupted as people try to negotiate space for work and study, time and space for fun, and to be alone. This increased togetherness can contribute to tension in those relationships. Stress may be expressed in various ways, such as increased irritability, criticism, impulsive comments, and variability in emotions.

Today's Wellness Tips offers some general strategies which may be helpful for you as you navigate increased togetherness:

1. Sit down together once a week to review the past week, plan for the coming week, and discuss how each person's needs and wants might be negotiated. Informal check-ins during the week can be helpful to see if everyone is on track with following through or if adjustments need to be made.
2. Agree on use of space and times for using it. The kitchen, study, work areas, TV room.
3. Give each other space. Make your request in a neutral manner. Try not ask at the last minute but do so if necessary.
4. Avoid blaming or judging when you are making a request or bringing up a potentially sensitive topic. This will help you to address issues in a more neutral way and result in more effective problem-solving.
5. With everyone at home and together more, there may be a need to divide chores differently than previously. For example, that kitchen counter may need to be kept clear more promptly.
6. Don't become laser-focused on others' perceived faults. Try to appreciate the positive.
7. Remember that this won't last forever.
8. Participate in some activities separately in addition to fun activities together.

Communication techniques that can be helpful in discussing topics of concern include:

1. Be specific, describing your concern. Focus on the behavior, don't attack the other person or use judgmental comments.
"Could I talk with you about the kitchen? The counter is often full of dirty dishes after you have been cooking."

2. Focus on YOUR feelings.
“I feel frustrated and disorganized when I go to cook and don’t have room on the counter or sink and there aren’t any clean pans available.”
3. State what you would like to happen.
“I would appreciate it if you would put the dishes in the dishwasher directly after you are done cooking”.
4. Be willing to negotiate.
“Could you start with the breakfast dishes so we can begin the day with a neat kitchen?”
5. Stay focused on the topic. Don’t get distracted or change the subject. Don’t engage in personal criticisms.

As always, feel free to contact MSCC with questions or concerns or to schedule an appointment.

Stay Safe and Take Care.

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