



Teacher Guide 5: Social Isolation and Stress

NGSS in this Module

Science and Engineering Practices

Developing and Using Models

Develop a model to describe unobservable mechanisms.

Planning and Carrying Out Investigations

- Plan and conduct an investigation or test a design solution in a safe and ethical manner including considerations of environmental, social, and personal impacts.
- Make directional hypotheses that specify what happens to a dependent variable when an independent variable is manipulated.

Constructing Explanations and Designing Solutions

- Make a quantitative and/or qualitative claim regarding the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Disciplinary Core Ideas: N/A

Crosscutting Concepts

Cause and Effect: Mechanism and Prediction

Empirical evidence is required to differentiate between cause and effect and correlation and make claims about specific causes and effects.

Key Terms:

- **Social isolation**
- **Loneliness**
- **Emotion contagion**
- **Affect**



- Stress
- Emotion regulation
- Post traumatic growth
- Meta moment

Challenge 1: Teacher resources about loneliness:

“Loneliness is at Epidemic Levels in America”

<https://www.cigna.com/about-us/newsroom/studies-and-reports/combating-loneliness/>

Loneliness (resources from Psychology Today):

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/loneliness>

“Speaking of Psychology: Living in a Lonely World” (podcast and transcript):

<https://www.apa.org/research/action/speaking-of-psychology/lonely-world>

“The lethality of loneliness: John Cacioppo at TEDxDesMoines” (TED talk video by a psychological scientist): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0hxI03JoA0

“How’s Your Social Health” (blog post):

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/social-health/202005/how-s-your-social-health>

Challenge 2: Teacher resources:



The health and psychological effects of translating emotional experiences into words (lecture by Dr James Pennebaker, social psychologist studying expressive writing):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQ1J9mrj9U4>

“The Contagion We Can Control” (blog post by Sigal Barsade, who studies emotion contagion)
<https://hbr.org/2020/03/the-contagion-we-can-control>

Challenge 3: Teacher resources

Try These Two Smart Techniques to Help You Master Your Emotions (book excerpt)
<https://ideas.ted.com/try-these-two-smart-techniques-to-help-you-master-your-emotions/>

3 Ways to Regulate Your Emotions (blog post)
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/between-cultures/201709/3-ways-regulate-your-emotions>

Control Your Feelings in 5 Stages (popular science article)
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/control-your-feelings-in-5-stages/>

Challenge 4: Teacher resources

Stress Relief is within Reach (resources to understand the effects of stress and resources about effective coping with stress from the American Psychological Association)
<https://www.apa.org/topics/stress>

Post-Traumatic Growth During a Pandemic: Is That a Thing? (blog post)
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-mindful-self-express/202005/post-traumatic-growth-during-pandemic-is-thing>

Yale SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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What is Post-Traumatic Growth (+ Inventory and Scale; article on theories of post-traumatic growth, comparison with resilience, and access to a questionnaire to assess one's post-traumatic growth)

<https://positivepsychology.com/post-traumatic-growth/>

How Teachers Can Buffer Student Stress from COVID-19

https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/ask_a_psychologist/2020/08/how_teachers_can_buffer_student_stress_from_covid-19.html

How Does Racism Affect Health?

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/evidence-based-living/202006/how-does-racism-affect-health>

Proactively Coping With Racism

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/culturally-speaking/201607/proactively-coping-racism>



Key Terms:

- Social isolation
- Loneliness
- Stress
- Self-disclosure
- Emotion regulation
- Coping
- Post-Traumatic Growth
- Stigma

The Module: Social Isolation & Stress

Narrative: Tash, Ray, and June have different social/emotional experiences of the pandemic, despite being in the same high school junior year. Ray seems highly stressed and unhappy. Much to his surprise, he actually misses being in school. He was supposed to start as a forward on the soccer team this year, but the season has been canceled. Since Tash tested positive for COVID-19, he is in strict isolation for at least two weeks even though he is asymptomatic. Meanwhile, June is concerned about her stressed-out friends, but she also finds that having less structure is helping her learn about herself and developing new interests.

Tash, Ray, and June miss hanging out with each other. It's difficult to adjust to these new life circumstances. They connect with other friends on the phone and do remote school work together (although socially distanced), but it's just not the same as being together in person. They talk about how the pandemic experience has influenced them and how it has changed them. How are you coping? What can we do to get through this? Why is this happening?

Performance Expectations:

- Distinguish between social isolation and loneliness.
- Recognize and utilize the effects of emotion contagion and benefits of self-disclosure for coping.
- Recognize that emotions can be managed using strategies that focus on thought or action.
- Identify and utilize strategies for how stress can lead to growth.



Challenges

- 1: How Does the Pandemic Make Us Feel?
- 2: From “What We Feel” to “How We Cope”
- 3: How Can We More Effectively Manage Emotions?
- 4: What Did I Learn About Myself?

Challenge 1: How Does the Pandemic Make Us Feel?

Learning Targets:

- I can distinguish between social isolation and loneliness.
- I can infer the design of a descriptive investigation based on information provided in infographics that present study findings.

Time Required: 45-60 minutes

1.1 Review & Discuss results from a 2018 study of loneliness presented in 2 “Loneliness in the Workplace” Infographics

- <https://www.cigna.com/static/www-cigna-com/docs/about-us/newsroom/studies-and-reports/combating-loneliness/cigna-2020-loneliness-factsheet.pdf>
- <https://www.cigna.com/static/www-cigna-com/docs/about-us/newsroom/studies-and-reports/combating-loneliness/cigna-2020-loneliness-infographic.pdf>
 - a. What does the infographic tell us about the level of loneliness prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic?
 - b. How was “loneliness” measured in this investigation?
 - c. What other variables (other than loneliness) were assessed by the questionnaire?
 - d. What conclusions from the study are presented in this report?
 - e. Only adults were subjects in this investigation. In what ways do you see its conclusions relating to you and high school students?



1.2 Read:

- a. “Researchers find resilience, not loneliness in nationwide study of pandemic response”: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/06/200622095016.htm>
- b. “Five Major Myths About Loneliness”
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/social-health/202008/5-major-myths-about-loneliness>
- c. “How to Prevent Loneliness in a Time of Social Distancing”:
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-to-prevent-loneliness-in-a-time-of-social-distancing/>

1.3 Reflect and Write:

- a. What are the differences between social isolation and loneliness? Discuss ways that social isolation can affect loneliness.
- b. A research study surveyed the same group of people in February (before the pandemic), in mid March (at the beginning of the pandemic), and in late April (over a month into the pandemic) and did not find significant changes in loneliness.
 - What would you hypothesize about these findings?
 - Why do you think there were no significant changes in loneliness rates?
 - What is your prediction about whether significant changes in loneliness rates exist now, many months into the pandemic?

1.4 Discuss: Share your hypotheses about the changes in loneliness with the prolonged social isolation during COVID-19 pandemic.



Challenge 2: How can we transition from “What We Feel” to “How We Cope”?

Learning Targets:

- I can model the process of emotion contagion to explain how it works.
- I can give examples of specific effects of emotion contagion occurring during the pandemic.
- I can explain “self-disclosure” and predict its possible benefits for coping in challenging situations.

Time Required: 45-60 minutes

2.1 Watch: “Wharton Ready Livecast Series: Emotion Contagion with Sigal Barsade” [3:44-10:54] to learn about how emotions can spread.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SThwxAqslM>

2.2 Reflect and Discuss:

- a. What is the process of Emotion Contagion?
- b. Think of examples of positive and negative emotion contagion you have experienced.

2.3 Read: 2 articles

- a. “Is a Happy Day Filled with Happy Moments?”

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/ulterior-motives/202008/is-happy-day-filled-happy-moments>

- b. “Keep Calm, Carry On... And Share”

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-s-mind-is-yours/202005/keep-calm-carry-and-share>



2.4 Reflect and Discuss:

- a. Research has shown that high smartphone use is related to more loneliness when it is used for passive scrolling, but less loneliness when it is used to engage with others.
- b. You also read research about what makes happy and unhappy days. Discuss how you can apply this research.

2.5 Discuss: Get together with a friend and share ideas for how to cope with the pandemic challenge.



Challenge 3: How Can We More Effectively Deal With Our Emotions?

Learning Target: I can recognize that emotions can be managed using strategies that focus on thought or action.

Time Required: 45-60 minutes

3.1 Watch: “You Aren’t at the Mercy of Your Emotions -- Your Brain Creates Them” [18:21]

https://www.ted.com/talks/lisa_feldman_barrett_you_aren_t_at_the_mercy_of_your_emotions_your_brain_creates_them?language=en#t-1096539

3.2 Read:

- a. “What Do We Do With All of These Feelings”
<https://www.marcbrackett.com/what-do-we-do-with-all-these-feelings/>
- b. “Being Our Best Self During Challenging Times”
<https://www.marcbrackett.com/being-our-best-self-during-challenging-times/>
- c. “Procrastination Isn’t a Time Management Problem, It Is an Emotional Problem”
<https://zapier.com/blog/procrastination-emotion/>

3.3 Reflect and Discuss:

- a. People often define emotion regulation as making oneself feel better or happier. However, emotion regulation does not have to involve making oneself feel better. Think of examples of when you have regulated an emotion (or should have regulated your emotion) that did not have a goal of making yourself feel happier.
- b. Think of examples of when you have regulated an emotion (or should have regulated an emotion.). How could you reduce boredom in the time of the pandemic? How could you increase your feeling of being close with and connected to others? Think of many ideas. Be creative.



3.4 Write: Write a fictional or factual blog post aimed at students at your school that explains the importance of developing strategies for regulating emotions and offers tips to regulate common emotions during the pandemic.

Challenge 4: What Did I Learn About Myself?

Learning Targets:

I can describe and use several strategies to deal with stress.

I can differentiate among the three types of stress.

I can explain ways that stress can lead to growth.

Time Required: 45-60 minutes

4.1 Read -- What is stress?

- a. "How to Deal With Stress"

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/get-out-your-mind/201806/how-deal-stress>

- b. "The Three Types of Stress"

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/open-gently/201812/the-three-types-stress>

- c. "Stress Can Be Good for You"

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/between-cultures/202008/stress-can-be-good-you>

4.2 Read -- How can we grow from stress?

- a. "Post-Traumatic Growth: Finding Meaning and Creativity in Adversity":

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/beautiful-minds/post-traumatic-growth-finding-meaning-and-creativity-in-adversity/>

- b. "Creativity in a Coronavirus World"

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/and-all-jazz/202004/creativity-in-coronavirus-world>



4.3. Reflect and Respond:

- a. Reflect on what you learned about yourself or your relationships during the time of COVID-19. Consider whether anything surprised you and ways in which you might have changed.
- b. **Action challenge:** Do something creative to help you or someone you know cope with the COVID-19 challenges. Remember that creativity does not mean only something artistic, but can be something original and helpful that you do for friends or family. Reflect on your emotions and emotions of others involved. Discuss how creativity in our everyday lives (such as in our relationships) can affect our well-being.

Professional Opportunities

Child Psychologist

<https://www.psychologist-license.com/types-of-psychologists/child-psychologist.html#context/api/listings/prefilter>

School Psychologist

<https://www.psychologist-license.com/types-of-psychologists/school-psychologist.html#context/api/listings/prefilter>