



## **Flatten the curve #stayhome Feelings of Isolation: Loneliness or Being Alone**

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Submitted: 25. April 2020  
Published: 27. April 2020  
Volume: 7  
Issue: 2  
Affiliation: Theater Freiburg  
Languages: English  
Keywords: Coronavirus, Corona Crisis, Global issues, cultural world.  
Categories: Humanities, Social Sciences and Law  
DOI: 10.17160/josha.7.2.666

### Abstract:

With #stayhome, we are all in a very unusual situation. The quarantine can lead to social isolation, which can have far-reaching psychological consequences. Events are canceled, offices are moved to the home, and outdoor leisure activities are forbidden. Restrictions like these are difficult for most people to handle, but they present an even greater challenge to those already suffering from depression. How we relate to one another in this time of uncertainty has caused us all to consider how things were and how we want them to be moving forward.

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# Flatten the curve #stayhome Feelings of Isolation: Loneliness or Being Alone

BY: FRANZISKA BUTTGEREIT

## Abstract

With #stayhome, we are all in a very unusual situation. Quarantine can lead to social isolation, which can have far-reaching psychological consequences. Events are canceled, offices are moved to the home, and outdoor leisure activities are forbidden. Restrictions like these are difficult for most people to handle, but they present an even greater challenge to those already suffering from depression. How we relate to one another in this time of uncertainty has caused us all to consider how things were and how we want them to be moving forward.

The requirement to #stayhome has affected everyone differently. Some have found it to be a welcome change from the ordinary, an opportunity to spend more time with family, while others have found their productivity plummet for the same reason. Despite isolation from the outside world, some people have spouses, children, or roommates with whom to connect, while others are lucky to have a pet to keep them company. However, those who live alone must resort to technology to connect with friends and loved ones. Quarantine is necessary to combat the current pandemic, but it has meant a dramatic shift for our social networks. Building and maintaining positive social relationships are important aspects of a healthy life, and the barriers currently in place have caused our collective mental health to suffer.



Feelings of loneliness can arise even in those who have companionship, because 'being alone' and 'loneliness' are not the same thing. Being alone describes a physical state of being, while loneliness expresses a state of mind, or one's emotional status. This feeling can be influenced by various factors. For instance, as one looks out the window to see the beauty of spring, the chirping of birds reminds everyone that now is the time to get outside and enjoy nature. Yet society is locked in, and even worse, society FEELS locked in. Daily routines have shifted entirely, with limited access to important resources further impacting one's mood. Finding a healthy work - life balance is important, but with the two disparate aspects of life now housed under one roof, this balance has been increasingly difficult to find. Meeting friends and pursuing hobbies are important pillars for many of us in everyday life. The consequences of this imbalance may include symptoms such as psychological stress (stress disorder), emotional restlessness, stress, bad mood, irritability, insomnia, post-traumatic symptoms, anger, emotional exhaustion or fears associated with the virus.

According to the German Depression Aid Foundation, around 5.3 million people in Germany between the ages of 18 and 79 develop depression that requires treatment within one year. The probability of suffering from a depressive disorder in the course of a lifetime is around 25 to 30 percent, explains Professor Kamila Jauch-Chara, the medical director of the Center for Integrative Psychiatry at the University Medical Center Schleswig-Holstein in Kiel. She warns that the side effects of the corona pandemic can provoke a crisis, particularly among mentally unstable people.

The pandemic refers to a virus that attacks the body, but depression is likely to infect many others. Large segments of the population are out of work, and many of them may not have jobs when the stay-at-home order is lifted. Even those people in well-paying jobs may find a reduced work load and/or reduced compensation as a result. Investments are falling precipitously, and for retirees such an event can cause tremendous anxiety. Children fear for their parents' safety, knowing that the elderly are far more likely to die than others.



At the moment, it is unknown when the world will return to anything resembling normalcy, and even when a vaccine is available and it is by all accounts safe to go outside, many people will still be suffering from anxiety and/or depression for which there is no vaccine. Restaurants and theaters may reopen, but how long will it take for people to dine out or attend a concert? The effects of this pandemic are deep and far reaching, and society will be dealing with its consequences long after it has been eradicated.

The focus has long been on flattening the curve of the virus, but it is important to stem the tide of mental health issues resulting from the virus as well. Unfortunately, there is no simple answer, however there are many small steps one can take to get through this difficult time. First and foremost, it is important to ask for help. Discuss loneliness and other problems with friends, family, or other trusted parties. If possible, go for a walk in nature while observing appropriate social distance. Reconnect with old friends, and stay in touch with older loved ones who may be struggling due to the isolation. Use this time as an opportunity for growth and development. Unplug from technology and read a book. Clean out that closet that has needed attention. Take up baking, or perfect the recipe to a favorite dish. Find time to expand the mind through meditation. Families can have regular game nights. The world will be feeling the effects of this pandemic for a long time, but it is not altogether impossible to learn a few things along the way.

## About the author:



### **Franziska Buttgereit (Mezzosopranistin)**

Franziska Buttgereit erhielt 2007 den 1. Bundespreis in der Kategorie Alte Musik sowie den Sonderpreis der Manfred Vetter-Stiftung als auch den 2. Preis für Alte Musik beim Händelwettbewerb in Karlsruhe. Den ersten Gesangsunterricht erhielt sie 2007 bei Frau Prof.

Ingeborg Möller und Lini Gong. Es folgten weitere Wettbewerbe und Preise im Fach



Gesang. Diese Preise wiederum brachten Franziska nach Lübeck zu Meisterkursen bei Prof. Christiane Hampe und Michael Gehrke. Seit 2010 ist sie Mitglied des Extrachores des Theater Freiburg und 1. Vorstand desselben seit 2017.

2015 begann sie ihr Studium für Gesang bei Prof. Christiane Libor an der Musikhochschule Schloss Gottesaue in Karlsruhe. Bis heute folgen Kooperationen mit der Hochschule und dem Stadttheater Freiburg, was ihr u. a. zu einer kleinen Rolle in den Vorstellungen sowie der gleichnamigen DVD-Produktion „Cendrillon“ von Jules Massenets verhalf. Neben ihren Auftritten auf der Musiktheaterbühne widmet sich Franziska Buttgerit leidenschaftlich dem Oratorien- und Konzertrepertoire, womit sie regelmäßig als Solistin auftritt.