The Relationship Between Loneliness, Isolation, and Social Distancing

Scott Lewis, PHD, LPC
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Western Psychiatric Hospital

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Central East (HHS Region 3)
MHTTC
Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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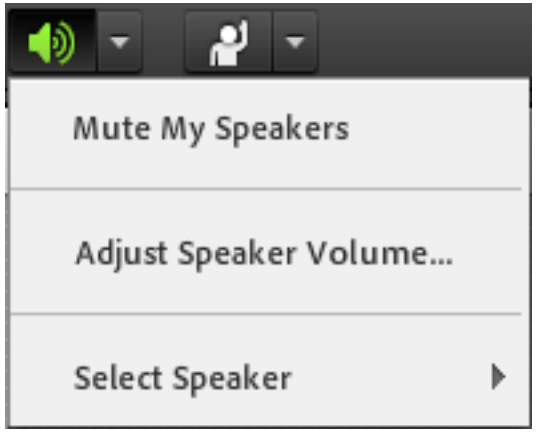
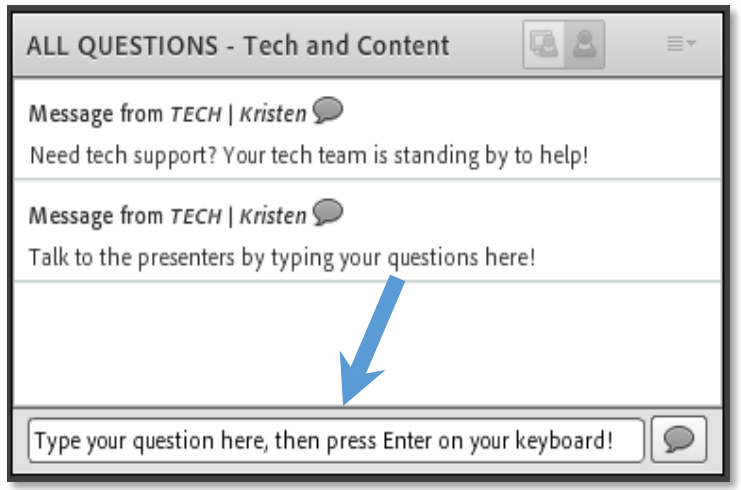
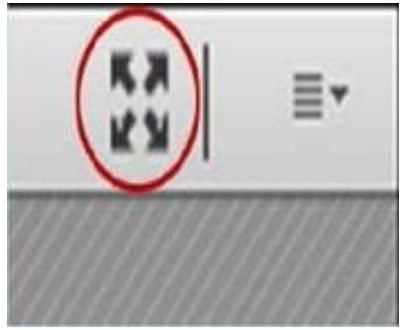
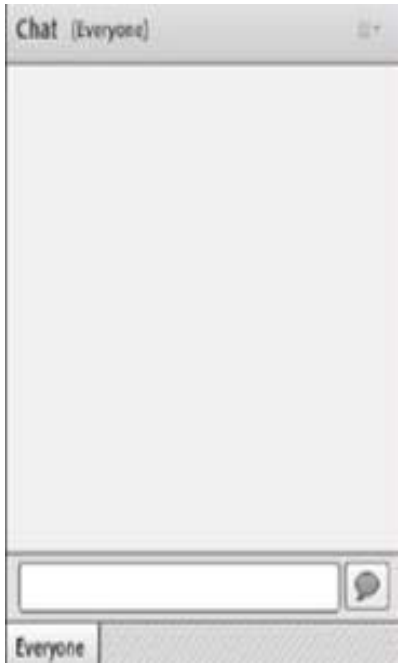


Questions and Resources

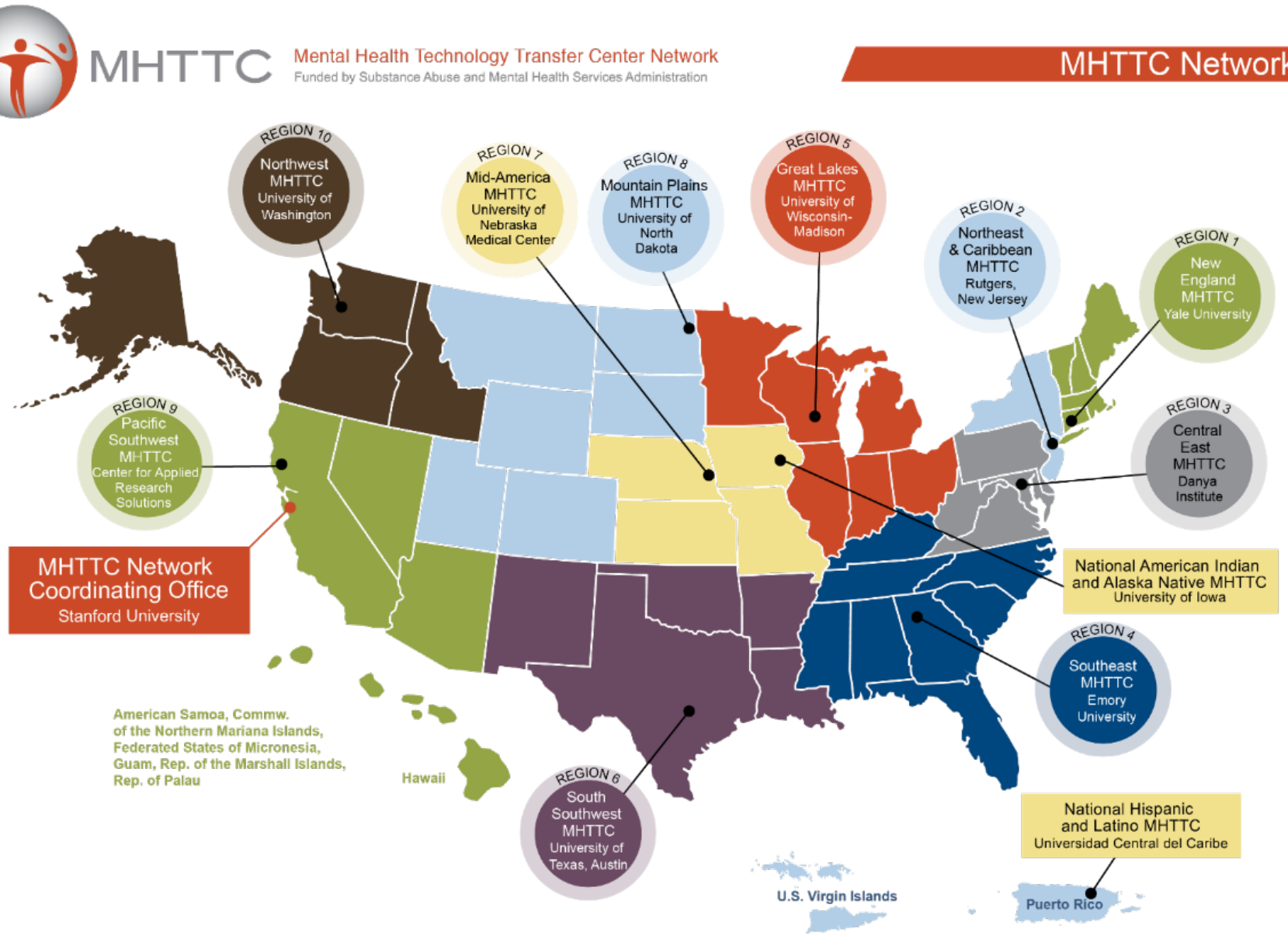
- Content questions and tech support requests go into the ALL QUESTIONS box.
- Share resources and network with colleagues in the Public Chat.
- Enlarge the screen with four outward facing arrows.







MHTTC Network



MHTTC Purpose

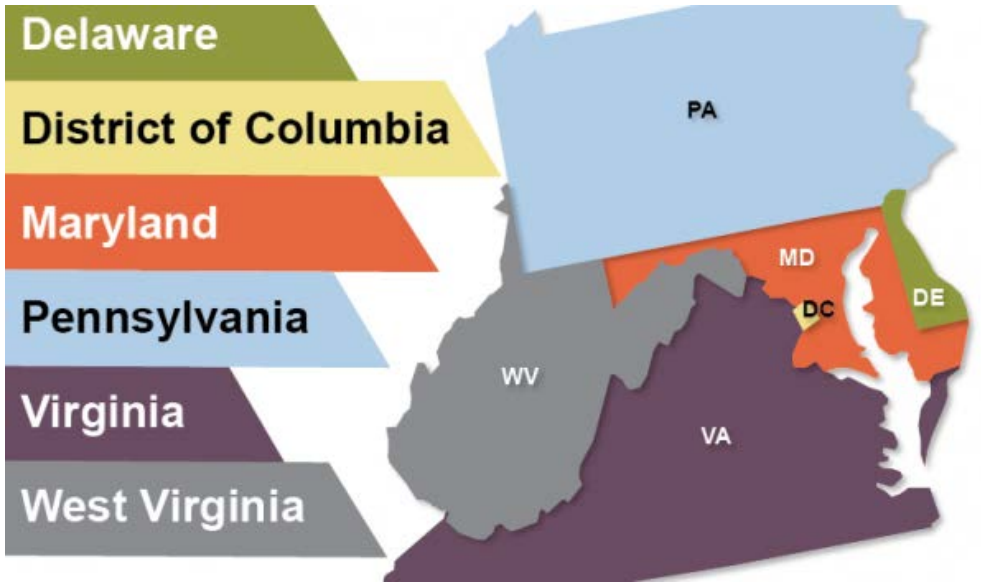
The MHTTC Network vision is to unify science, education and service to transform lives through evidence-based and promising treatment and recovery practices in a recovery-oriented system of care.

Central East MHTTC Goals

Funded by SAMHSA to:

- Accelerate the adoption and implementation of mental health related evidence-based practices
- Heighten the awareness, knowledge, and skills of the behavioral health workforce
- Foster alliances among culturally diverse practitioners, researchers, policy makers, family members, and consumers
- Ensure the availability and delivery of publicly available, free of charge, training and technical assistance

Central East Region 3



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The Relationship Between Loneliness, Isolation, and Social Distancing

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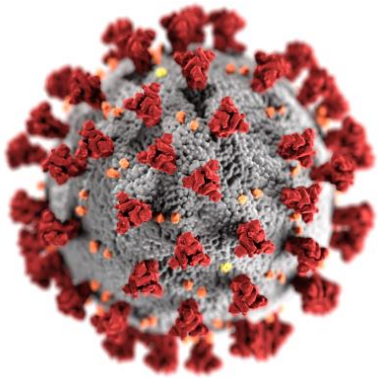
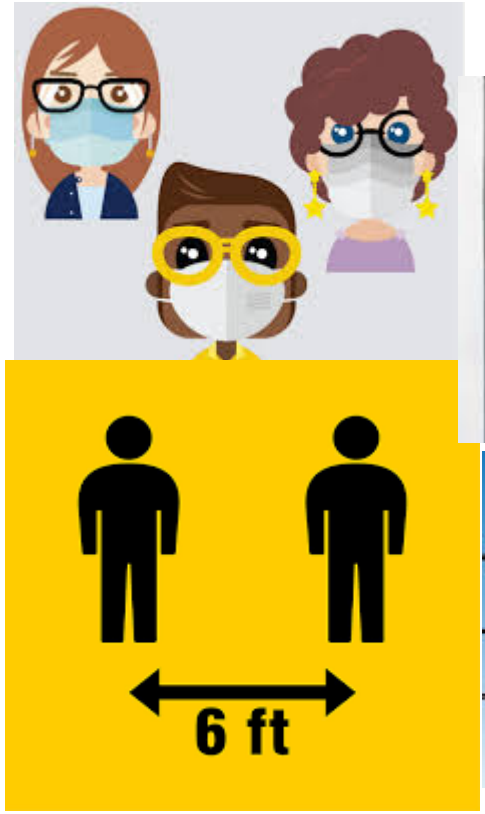
Objectives

1. Define the constructs of loneliness, isolation, and social distancing, their intra-relatedness, and the mechanisms by which they lead to poor physical and mental health.
2. Review how the COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased attention on social isolation and loneliness affecting individuals of all ages.
3. Review intervention strategies to help combat loneliness and social isolation.

COVID-19 Phenomenon



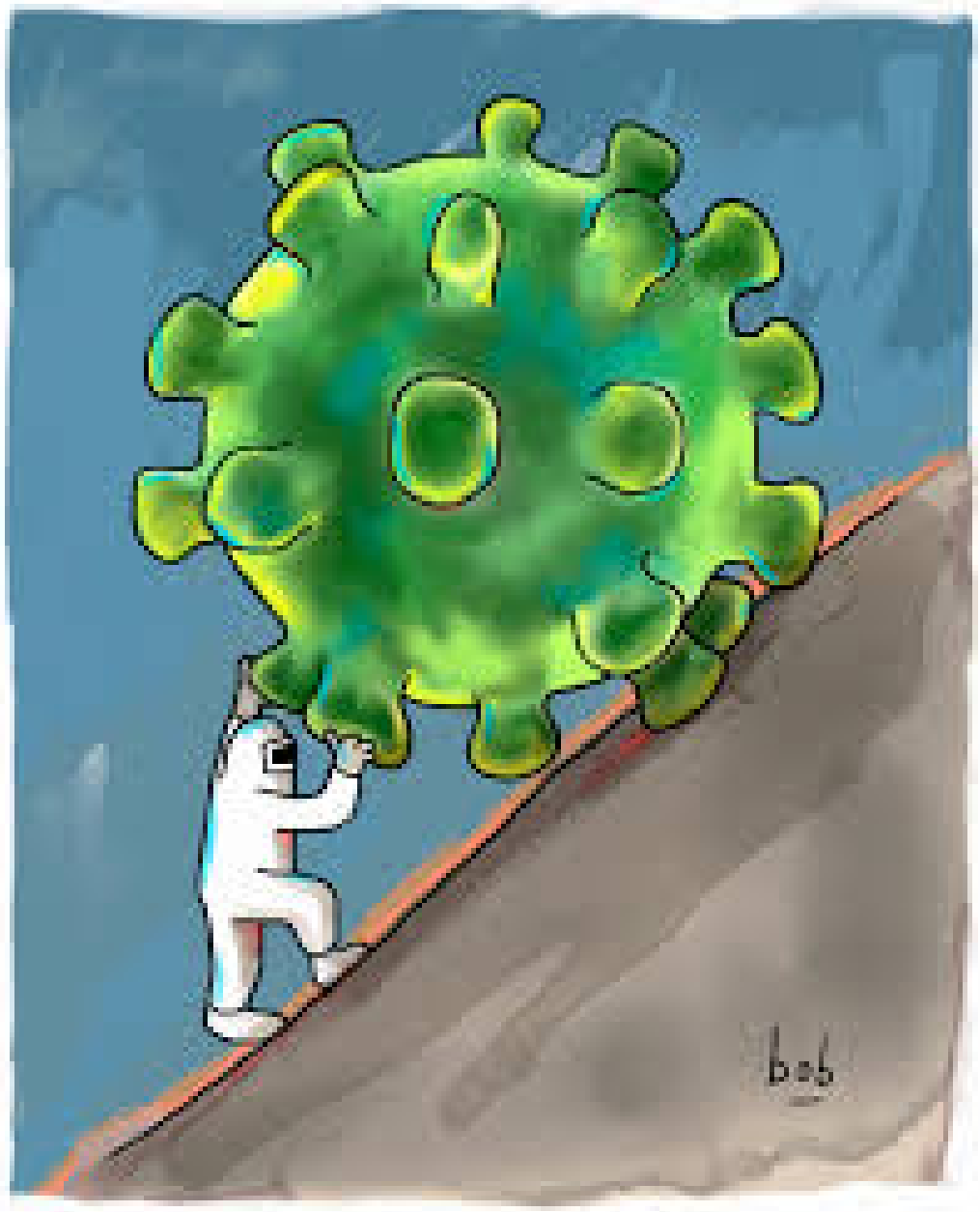


Definitions

- **Loneliness**: distressing emotional response to perceived lack of quantity and/or quality of relationships
- **Isolation**: separation from or in the absence of others
- **Social distancing**: maintaining physical distance between self and others as a measure to prevent spread of disease or infection

Physical & Psychological Effects from Loneliness and Social Isolation

- Less resilient to stress
- Weakens immune functioning
- Cognitive decline
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Suicidality
- Decreases the likelihood that one will perform healthy behaviors such as exercising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Intervention and Coping Strategies
Where do we start?

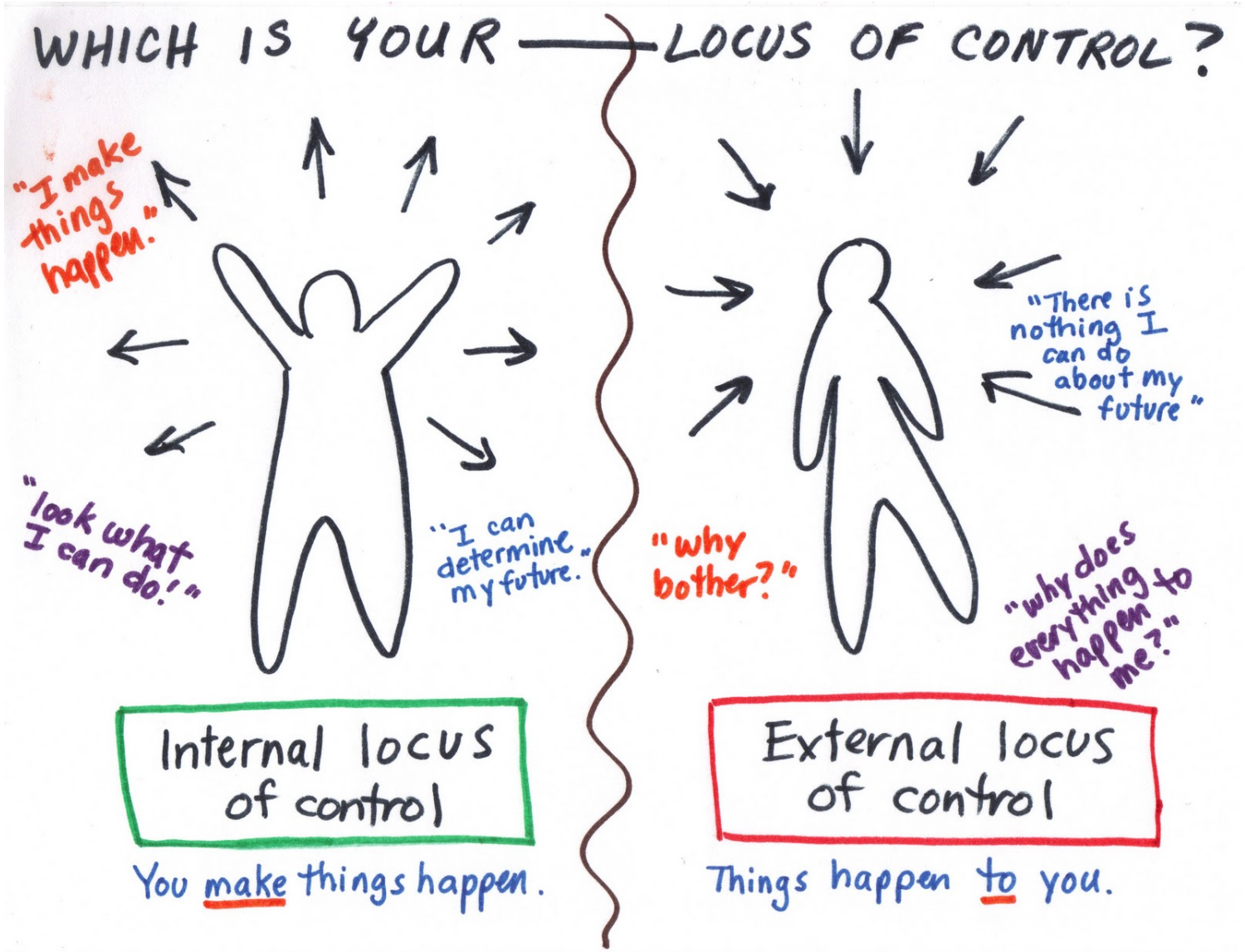
Loneliness (subjective) and isolation (objective) are distinct constructs and therefore, must be addressed separately

Targeting one doesn’t necessarily influence the other

Increasing social interactions, time spent with others, etc. may not lead to feeling less lonely…

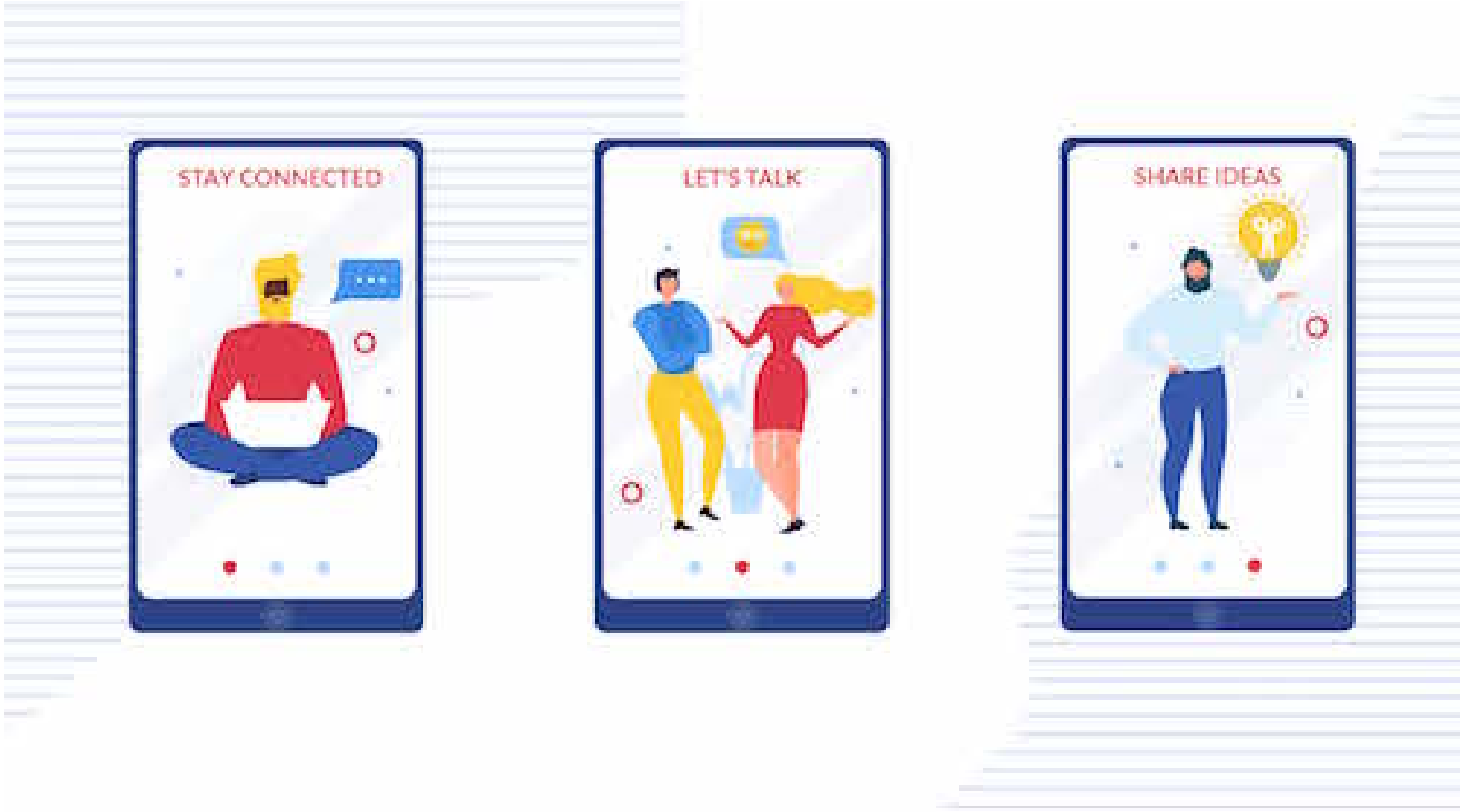
Need to address post-COVID era as well

Locus of Control



Source: Resilience and Locus of Control in the Time of Pandemic (Psychiatric Times, May 6, 2020)

Coping Tactics



Source: National Association of Mental Illness website

Physiological Distress

Deep breathing: 3-4-5 or 4-5-6

Progressive muscle relaxation

Vigorous movement or exercise

Mindfulness

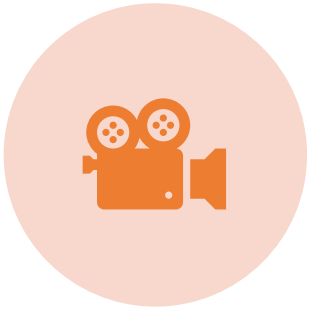
Reframe / Reassess

Find the positive

Look for opportunities

Feel gratitude

Social Connection



VIDEO CHATS

ONLINE COMMUNITIES

SAFELY DISTANCED/MASKED GET TOGETHERS

VOLUNTEER

Other interventions and coping

Self-care

Routine

Healthy diet

Exercise

Adequate sleep

Social prescribing by healthcare providers

Limit exposure to media/news

Quality time with family/friends

Spend time with pets

Develop a plan & know your resources…

Keeping each other safe and connected is everyone's responsibility

If you miss your friends and have something to share ...

... just reach out - they're still there.

Physical distancing **is not** social isolation

World Health Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR Europe

Together we can beat COVID-19

#covid19

Appreciation

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a program managed by

Central East MHTTC website

Oscar Morgan, Project Director

Danya Institute website

Email

240-645-1145