



mind matters



MINU BUDHIA

HEALTH

I am a 75-year-old widow living alone in my apartment. By God's grace I am fit and healthy for my age and have received both doses of the vaccine. My domestic help recently tested positive and is isolating in her home. Now that there is no one at home and I can't even visit neighbours, I feel very lonely. I listen to the radio and watch TV to pass the time, but the news of death and gloom depresses me. There is so much fear, hopelessness, helplessness, and uncertainty right now and I feel like I have no control over what will happen. Two of my close friends and family members succumbed to Covid-19 recently. Will I survive this alone?

that it is okay not to be okay and that it is perfectly alright to worry about your health and future, especially since you are grieving the loss of close friends.

You are not alone, and for seniors in your position, there are many home-care packages being offered by hospitals where nurses and/or domestic staff can come stay with you. You can opt for this till your own domestic help has recovered and is healthy enough to return to work. And to reduce the stress of cooking and cleaning, you can opt for a meal delivery subscription.

Regarding entertainment, if you use a smartphone or a computer, listen to music via apps, watch a couple of comedy web series, and animal and baby videos on YouTube. Avoid WhatsApp forwards

and stay off Facebook as much as possible. Also, when watching television, limit your news consumption to 30 minutes max. And if there's a long forgotten hobby like singing, painting, or writing, resume that with new vigour.

To stay connected, video call with family, friends, and even neighbours. Whether they are one floor away or a continent away, make it a point to talk to loved ones and friends for at least an hour a day. Many of your peers may be feeling the same way that you do, and your calls to them could cheer them up too. If you have a special occasion coming up, see how you can celebrate it in a small and virtual way. Create and celebrate every moment that you are here and you will soon see that you are able to cope with hope.

Loneliness, especially now, is quite natural. So the first thing I want you to do is validate your feelings. Accept

I am 20 years old and in a long-distance relationship with a boy who is 24. We met through a letter-writing app. Both of us are from India and belong to the same community. We fell in love and, like any couple, have fights too. He is quite insecure, more than me, but we talked and sorted things out. We were even planning to meet each other, but suddenly he said that he likes another girl. His online college classes have restarted and he thinks a girl from his college is a better option than having a long-distance girlfriend. He had been flirting with her, started a relationship with her, and then told me about the break-up. But he also wants to stay in contact with me and says he wants to come back

to me. I'm really confused. What should I do?

Long distance can be tough on most people, especially on young relationships, that too during these pandemic times. With lack of face-to-face communication, the chance of misunderstandings is always higher. While your ex-boyfriend seems to be confused between you and the other girl, you don't need to be. Since you have not met yet, you can keep in touch as friends if you want to, but pursuing a relationship right now does not seem advisable.

However, if you decide to pursue this relationship, have a frank talk with him

about what both of you are looking for. To facilitate better conversation, use a mix of text messages, phone calls and video calls. Watch movies and TV shows together, share news and music, even do the crossword. Just because you live in different places doesn't mean you can't have shared experiences. Have detailed conversations about your likes, dislikes and boundaries. The two most important pillars of any relationship are trust and respect. Since your trust has been broken, he must be patient and committed to proving himself worthy and try to earn it again.



come as a shock to many and it seems like your uncle is trying to deal with it in his own way. He is being extra careful and extra thorough while cleaning, which is giving him some sense of control in the middle of an uncertain new normal. Speak frankly with your uncle over a video call and call him often to check in. If he is bored or lonely, he may be cleaning just to kill time or to distract himself from the anxiety he feels.

Several senior citizens or almost senior citizens have chosen this self-imposed isolation to reduce their chances of contracting Covid-19. If it makes him feel safer, and does not affect his daily life or his sleep-wake-nourish cycle, there is no harm if he is cleaning three times a day. While talking, also ask about

his neighbours and family members. If someone in his home, complex, or neighbourhood has been infected or he has neighbours or family not following safety protocols, he may just be double masking and wearing gloves indoors in an attempt to keep himself safe.

Given that we are currently living in a constantly evolving world that is rapidly changing every day, the way we define 'normal' is also being impacted. It's a pandemic that's wreaking havoc in every aspect of our lives — it's not just a passing phenomenon, and different people cope differently. If you are still worried, set up an appointment with a counsellor to speak about his habits in greater detail. As your uncle is under duress, it may help him to speak with a professional and unburden his worries.

My question is for my 56-year-old uncle. A happy-go-lucky man who used to be an extrovert, he has now not stepped out of his house in over a year. He has all the cleaning and sanitising products available on the market — gels, solutions, sprays, wipes, disinfectants — cleans his apartment three times a day, and wears double masks and gloves at home. Is this normal or does he have OCD? Please help.

The second wave of Covid-19 has



Minu Budhia is a psychotherapist, counsellor, founder of Caring Minds, iCanFly, Cafe iCanFly, and a TEDx speaker. Write to askminubudhia@careingminds.co.in