



You are not alone

“It’s been great to spend more time with family.” “I can’t be with all my friends, but we can video chat!” “Enjoy the chance to really bond with your children!”

These are common phrases to hear right now, as everyone tries to find the bright side of self-quarantining because of coronavirus (COVID-19), and that bonding time can truly be a valuable coping tool. For some, these words can be hard to hear, if they are experiencing domestic violence and are isolated from their loved ones.

Survivors of domestic violence may not have the support of friends and family for a number of reasons: the abuser may have sabotaged those relationships, the survivor feels shame over the abuse, or family and friends may have cut the survivor off because they don’t understand how to support the survivor while s/he is in an abusive relationship. The isolation around coronavirus specifically creates another set of barriers, which can [leave survivors feeling alone](#).

Survivors also often experience physical abuse through their abusers’ controlling behaviors. With the self-quarantining measures currently in effect, the survivor and abuser may be together more, because there’s a limited opportunity to leave the home. In these close quarters, an abuser may place blame on a survivor’s actions- from not doing chores properly to talking too loudly- and may use that to justify explosive behavior. Despite where the abuser tries to place blame, the abuse is never the survivor’s fault.

In addition to all these abusive tactics, survivors may be experiencing emotional abuse. In fact, the [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#) says 95% of men who physically abuse their intimate partner also psychologically abuse them. That can involve abusers belittling or humiliating the survivor, playing mind games to make them feel they are going crazy, devaluing survivors as people, and more.

Combine this isolation, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and a lack of loved ones to provide support, and then add in the sight of happy families around a board game or friends video chatting, and survivors may feel even more alone. In that way, the COVID-19 pandemic can further contribute to the trauma a survivor is experiencing.

Survivors, Hubbard House wants you to know you’re not alone.

Hubbard House’s hotline is staffed 24/7 by trained advocates, for any survivor who needs someone to talk to. Through the hotline, we not only provide safety planning and assistance catered to the survivor’s situation, but we may also be able to make referrals to community partners, for any additional care outside of our scope. The hotline number is (904) 354-3114.

Hubbard House also encourages survivors and everyone dealing with this change in daily life to take time to focus on self-care. This can include some of the following steps, adapted from DomesticShelters.org and the National Domestic Violence Hotline:

- Allow “self-compassion”- With everything happening, it can be difficult to make yourself a priority, but allow yourself to do just that. Let go of any judgement you have of yourself and your actions, and focus on the now. Self-care is not selfish, so don’t judge yourself for focusing on it.
- Fulfill your basic needs- With so much to worry about, it’s easy to forget to eat a proper meal or get enough sleep. Making a list of those basic needs allows you to see the core things you should focus on each day.
 - A survivor of domestic violence may not be in control of those basic needs because of the abuse, but creating the list can allow a survivor to find one or two things to focus on. This list will also highlight items a survivor can’t control, which are areas where they may be more vulnerable to abusive control by their partner. Hubbard House can help survivors actively safety plan around those areas.
- Try a new activity or restart an old hobby you enjoyed- Reading, knitting, swimming, baking, stretching, singing, running, painting, meditating and so much more. If you have the ability and resources to enjoy a hobby, it can help fill the time and bring you joy.
 - For survivors of domestic violence specifically, please consider the abuser’s potential response. For example, if you are journaling, the journal should not be kept somewhere the abuser can find it.
- Maintain (or throw out!) your routine- for some people, there is comfort in what is familiar. Even though many normal routines have been turned upside down by coronavirus, try to establish a new routine that you can reasonably follow. It can be as simple as, when you’re working from home, changing out of your pajamas before you clock-in, to give yourself a feeling of starting your workday.
 - Maybe you are finding it stressful to establish or maintain that routine? That’s ok! Then loop back up to “self-compassion,” and know it’s ok to let that go!

There is no one course of action that will apply for every survivor or every person, and what some find relaxing others may find stressful. Especially for survivors of domestic violence, there is the added consideration of the actions of the abuser. Only survivors can determine what is best for themselves and their situations, but if it’s safe to do so, Hubbard House encourages spending time on self-care. That self-care can be some of the steps above, other actions survivors believe have a benefit during this stressful time, or a call to our confidential hotline at (904) 354-3114.

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