

The Impact of Social Distancing on levels of anxiety, a nutritionist's perspective.

Humans are primates, as a result we function in complex social networks. We are meant to be close, connect with eye contact, watch for clues of safety and above all connect via touch such as hugging.

Since 2020, pretty much did not turn out to be a "normal" year by any means, I am seeing more than ever anxiety levels rising in my practice and community in general. People are coping with anxiety by using alcohol, over eating, living on refined sugars, and choosing to become more sedentary than ever.

We must all do what we can at this time to stay safe and healthy, that much is clear. Unfortunately, wearing face masks puts us in a sympathetic state of our nervous system also known as a stress response or fight or flight. Think about historically faces were covered by doctors, bank robbers and ninja warriors, all typically induce anxiety. This is a complex process that impacts the vagus nerve (10th cranial nerve), one of the most important means of connecting the brain to the digestive tract. Often times the vagus nerve is shut down triggering a host of issues such as poor digestion or anxiety, in my opinion it's a core root cause in many bodily imbalances.

I work on reversing this with my clients using various modalities. Clearly regardless of personal views of wearing masks, I will encourage all those around me to reconnect with those that are close in terms of physical proximity. Get back outside and spend time in nature, watch funny movies, look at old photos and relive fun adventures, maybe even make plans and research for the future. Take deep breaths, yes, it's a simple act but can reduce anxiety by 50% in a matter of a few minutes. Get as many hugs as possible if you have a loved one in the home, it raises the "love" hormone known as oxytocin.

Do not just say I will try, but actually take small steps to improve your personal situation.

One day at a time, stay strong, time heals all- don't just wait take action.

One of the main ways that you can stimulate the healthy function of the vagus nerve is through deep, slow belly breathing.

1. Breathe more slowly (aim for six breaths per minute).

2. Breathe more deeply, from the belly. Think about expanding your abdomen and widening your rib cage as you inhale.
3. Exhale longer than you inhale.

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