

CHALLENGES OF ISOLATION



DESCRIPTION

A week into Circuit Breaker, the novelty of working from home and home-based learning are wearing off for many. What used to be fun and interesting - playing with technology, sleeping in, experimenting in the kitchen and having ample time for dramas and games, now seem boring and repetitive.

The circuit breaker measures bring along multiple challenges, one of which are the challenges of staying in isolation. Without physical gatherings among friends and family, what changes does it bring to our personal, social and home lives? While we are physically isolated, how can we keep ourselves socially connected?

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- Understand the rationale for social distancing and the elevated measures as the day passes
 - Explore the impact and challenges of isolation
 - Look for opportunities to reconnect meaningfully with family and friends, connecting and looking out for one another despite the physical distancing
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CHALLENGES OF ISOLATION

Influence and gain commitment from people

CHALLENGES OF ISOLATION – Part 1 (Exploring the Topic)

WHAT IS ONE WORD YOU WOULD ASSOCIATE WITH THE CURRENT COVID-19 SITUATION & MEASURES?

**7 APRIL 2020
START OF
CIRCUIT
BREAKER
MEASURES**



Source:

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/health/no-more-dining-in-at-hawker-centres-coffeeshops-restaurants-and-other-fb-outlets>

BUILDING CONTEXT

[Brief discussion]

What is one word you would associate with the current COVID-19 situation and the accompanying circuit breaker measures?

- Get an overview of what students think of the COVID-19 situation and measures right now
- Identify common words/ themes & get students to elaborate more about their experience, emotions and thoughts

Digital Interaction ideas:

- Word Cloud (e.g. Mentimeter) – Quick snapshot of the youth's perspective on current situation

Circuit Breaker measures:

- Non-essential businesses and services closed – many adults working from home (WFH) or on no-pay leave
- No dining in public spaces including hawker centres and void decks
- Schools closed the day after – 8 April 2020, full Home-based Learning (HBL)

**7 APRIL 2020
NO SOCIAL GATHERINGS**

Singapore

COVID-19: Social gatherings of any size in both private and public spaces prohibited under new Bill

Source:

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/covid-19-social-gatherings-private-and-public-moh-12617800>

**10 APRIL 2020
FURTHER RESTRICTIONS**

Coronavirus: Stadiums to close, children no longer allowed to be dropped off at grandparents' place daily

Source:

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/health/coronavirus-stadiums-to-close-circuit-breaker-measures-may-be-tightened-if-people>

**12 APRIL 2020
FIRST-TIME OFFENDERS:
S\$300 FINE**

Coronavirus: \$300 fine for flouting circuit breaker measures

Source:

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/300-fine-for-flouting-measures>

Supplementing the Circuit Breaker measures – No social gatherings of any size in both private and public spaces

- Implications:
 - No meeting of friends, even at void deck or at their houses
 - No meeting of family members in different households
- Excludes:
 - Assisting family members with daily needs, e.g. care of elderly family members, care for the sick

10 April 2020 – Social distancing measures further tightened

- 3 days after Circuit Breaker, even open-air stadiums were closed
 - **[Quick Discussion] Do you know why?**
 - People congregated at stadiums for group exercises and socializing
- Additional restrictions to protect the elderly – No longer allowed to send children to grandparents to take care of them. Instead, parents working in essential services can get access to childcare.
 - Reason: At the point of policy, 6 deaths were recorded – all were elderly
 - Consequence: Some elderly live alone – now without their grandchildren, they are in for a very lonely circuit breaker month

12 April 2020 – Fine imposed if one fails to comply to measures

- No warnings will be given
- S\$300 for first-time offenders, with higher penalties for repeated offenders

**16 APRIL 2020
9TH WORKER DORMITORY
PLACED UNDER ISOLATION**

Coronavirus: Mandai Lodge 1 in Mandai Road is 9th foreign worker dormitory to be declared isolation area

Source:

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/health/coronavirus-another-worker-dormitory-declared-isolation-area-bringing-total-to-9>

**21 APRIL 2020
TIGHTER MEASURES &
EXTENSION OF CIRCUIT BREAKER**

Singapore

COVID-19 circuit breaker extended until Jun 1 as Singapore aims to bring down community cases 'decisively': PM Lee

Source:

https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/covid-19-hairdressers-confectioneries-stan-alone-beverage-12662304?cid=h3_referral_in_articlelinks_24082018_cna

**CIRCUIT BREAKER CAN BE A
CHALLENGING TIME FOR
MANY**

**WHAT IS YOUR
CHALLENGE/DIFFICULTY?**

16 April 2020 – Singaporeans are not the only ones under isolation. The migrant worker community facing the greatest threat of COVID-19 infection

- As of 15 April, hit more than 1,800 cases linked to worker dormitories
- Day after, 9th dormitory declared as isolation area
- By 21 April 2020, total of 19 dormitories under isolation
- Dormitories are being placed under isolation = stay in room for 14 days

21 April 2020 - By now, many people are already experiencing the challenges of staying at home and being unable to gather with friends and family.

However, as of 21 April 2020, circuit breaker is extended for another month

Reasons:

- Persistent number of unlinked cases in the community, suggesting a “reservoir” of hidden & undetected COVID-19 cases still spreading in community
- Give time to detect and contain spread of COVID-19 cases from foreign worker dormitories to wider community, if it happens

Impact:

- Tighter control measures over malls and selected markets
- Trimmed-down list of essential services, which means doing away with comfort items like bubble tea and cakes

Circuit Breaker can be a challenging time for many individuals, families and communities.

[Discussion]

What is the greatest challenge/difficulty during this period of time?

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CHALLENGES OF ISOLATION – Part 2 (Exploring Impact of the Problem)

ONE BIG CHALLENGE:

BEING AWAY FROM FRIENDS/FAMILY

SOCIAL GATHERINGS STILL TAKING PLACE...



GROUP EXERCISES STILL TAKING PLACE...



NON-ESSENTIAL HOUSE VISITS

Circuit breaker: S'pore resident receives warning letter from police for visiting mother

Source:

<https://motherhip.sg/2020/04/warning-letter-visit-parent/>

EXPOUNDING ON IMPACT

One big challenge for us worldwide under social distancing measures and various degrees of lockdown: Isolation – being away from friends and family members not in the same household.

Initially, some people still attempted to socialise and meet up.

- It applies for friends and families
- For some, not meeting family members from other households are difficult – they could be siblings, parents/grandparents, uncles/aunties whom they are so used to spending time with

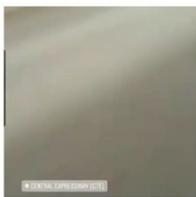
Routines can be difficult to break.

- If you meet this group of friends for meals/ games/ exercise regularly, it is difficult to stop all of a sudden
- Especially for the elderly, whom might not have a lot of social interaction to begin with
 - Elderly are probably less likely to navigate apps and software for video-calls
- As exercising is a legitimate reason to be out of the house, some groups exploited this “loophole”
 - Hence, the reason for closure of stadiums, the cordons put up at fitness corners, rule enforcements at parks

On **social media**, there were articles spreading around that the Police is doing “spot checks” on households to ensure that there is no non-essential house visits and those who get caught will be fined

- Fact Check #1: Police do not conduct random spot checks at home
 - For this particular case: Police was called to handle a domestic dispute, at the same time realising the flouting of circuit breaker rules

YOUTHS ON PMD IN CTE TUNNEL



Source: News Videos (Youtube)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nYOWWhy_pB6c&feature=youtu.be

WHY IS ISOLATION SO CHALLENGING?

- Other cases spreading online: Police was called in for reasons other than “random spot checks”
- Fact Check #2: Visiting family members of different households is acceptable if assistance in daily living is required + no one else in the same household could provide such assistance
- Highlight the existence of such behaviours: People still visit their family members for non-essential reasons, e.g. meals

Video: Youths riding Personal Mobility Devices (PMDs) in CTE tunnel

There were also reports of youths hanging out in groups during this time - some for sports/ exercise, some were just loitering

- Understand that they were trying to sustain usual social life
- But there are dangers when involved in this illegal act

[Discussion]

Why is Isolation so challenging for so many people?

Possible follow-up questions

- Why do people flout rules?
- For those who obeyed the rules and stayed home – do they face challenges too? What are these challenges?
- [Possible scaffold – by age groups/communities]
Why is isolation challenging for...
 - Adults and the elderly?
 - Youths?
 - Family members?

Note: People have the tendency to just label those who flout rules as “COVIDiots” and other names/labels. Hence, help youths understand the emotions and struggles underlying this behaviour.

Digital Interaction ideas:

- Forum/Discussion area (e.g. Padlet)
– Each to post their thoughts and upvote/comment on others – do you agree/disagree and why?

Challenges & Tensions from Isolation measures:

BOREDOM

A high schooler has been invading random Zoom classes with armies of up to 60 strangers and posting results on TikTok

MALISSA SAYS SHE DOESN'T "HAVE ANYTHING BETTER TO DO," SO SHE'S BEEN CROWD-SOURCING ZOOM CODES FOR VARIOUS CLASSES AND "POPPING IN AND OUT."

Source:

<https://www.insider.com/zoom-classes-high-school-zoombombing-crashes-as-part-of-trend-2020-4>

ANXIETY/FEAR

My routine every evening



#1 Boredom

- Nothing to do at home besides studying/ working
- Acts of mischief as an unhealthy way to deal with boredom: Zoombombing
 - Logging in to random zoom calls, typically with the intent to disrupt the call
 - In the US, one student recorded her exploits and shared on social media – more people got influenced and did the same
 - In Singapore, a Secondary School geography class was victim of Zoombombing

[Quick Discussion]

Who might be suffering from boredom at home?

Possible areas to explore:

- Family members are working in essential services, leaving child alone at home most of the time – isolated from both friends and family
- Family members who are not in essential services, and are unable to telecommute, i.e. left with nothing to do for most of the day. Made worse when all other family members are working from home/on home-based learning – no one to talk to for most of the day
- Those without access to reliable internet or not having computers – not able to access entertainment and socialising platforms
- Less tech-savvy adults/ elderly who might not know how to use videoconferencing apps - extremely isolating and boring
- Classmates who were typically more shy or without many friends
- Those whose main source of entertainment are outside of home/ with friends

#2 Anxiety/ Fear

- How many of us watch the case numbers closely?
- For some of us, with nothing much to occupy time, we turn to social media newsfeeds or watch/ read the latest COVID-19 updates to know what's happening outside our 4 walls
 - Can be anxiety – inducing watching numbers jump from 50+, to 100+, 200+, 400+, 700+
 - Fake news exacerbates fear and anxiety
- Could induce worry about the state of the country, livelihood, exams (for those having national exams)

- A bad throat/ cough/ cold could generate a lot fear of being infected with COVID-19
- Worried about family and friends

[Quick Discussion]

Who might be suffering from anxiety/fear?

Possible areas to explore:

- Elderly/ Immunocompromised people who are more susceptible to COVID-19 complications
- People living near cluster areas
- People with livelihoods disrupted – will my job be at risk? How much money do I have left to support my family?
- Families with members in hospital – no ward visits allowed during circuit breaker period. Anxiety over the well-being of family members

#3 Frustration/ Stress

- Above: A reporting of a video spreading online of a youth dancing on Lorong Halus Bridge show his displeasure at the stay home measures
- Given content of what he said, likely to be taken during the circuit breaker period

FRUSTRATION/STRESS

Youth dances on Lorong Halus bridge, says 'f*** the circuit breaker, they stay home, we stay out'



Source:

<https://motherhip.sg/2020/04/youth-dance-on-bridge-cb/>

FRUSTRATION/STRESS

"THE MORE THEY ASK US TO STAY AT HOME, THE MORE WE COME OUT."

"WE'RE STAYING OUT EVERY SECOND, EVERY MINUTE, EVERY HOUR EVERY DAY, UNTIL CORONAVIRUS SPREADS TO THE WHOLE SINGAPORE."

It can be very frustrating to stay at home

- Unable to do things we used to do

[Quick Discussion]

Who might be suffering from frustration/stress?

Possible areas to explore:

- People with strained family ties – now have to interact with family members 24/7
- People facing financial woes/ livelihood concerns – “If I don’t go to work, I can’t support my family”
- People who don’t understand the severity of COVID-19 – “why do we have to stay at home?”
- Adults juggling multiple roles – WFH + caregiver to elderly parents + childcare
- Stressed-out students – lack of outlet at home to destress e.g. Can’t play your favourite sports

Looking beyond us, our family and our friends, there is a group of people in Singapore who are at immense risk of COVID-19 infections: **Migrant Workers**

CHALLENGES FACED BY MIGRANT WORKERS

Singapore

Two weeks and a 70-fold increase: A look into the COVID-19 outbreak in Singapore's foreign worker dormitories

Source:

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/covid-19-singapore-foreign-worker-dorm-outbreak-increase-12649472>

SUJON'S STORY: WHAT STOOD OUT FOR YOU?



- Recent infection clusters - migrant workers in dormitories
- 16 April: Migrant workers in dormitories account for more than 2,600 cases out of total of 4,427 cases
- **Video** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHX2RGtx3DI>) – **hear one migrant worker's experience and his emotional journey in this COVID-19 situation**

[Discussion]

What stood out to you in Sujon's story?

- Possible follow-up questions:
 - What made you worried? What made you upset? What made you happy? Why?

Digital Interaction ideas:

- Forum/Discussion area (e.g. Padlet) – Each to post their thoughts and upvote/comment on others – any new perspectives to shed?

Note: Encourage students to recognise the demands and toll that being in isolation can have on a person, with migrant workers in dormitories possibly being one group that faces the gravest challenge now

CHALLENGES OF ISOLATION – Part 3 (Solutions)

GOVERNMENT & NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS REACHING OUT

Singapore

COVID-19: Ensuring the elderly don't become isolated during the outbreak

Seniors like Madam Koh, who has been living alone for more than a decade, are having fewer social interactions as the COVID-19 situation persists. Organisations are stepping in to help the elderly like her.

Source:

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/covid-19-loneliness-isolation-among-elderly-safe-distancing-12611158>

SUPPORT FROM NURSING HOMES AND HOSPICES

Singapore

COVID-19: Family members with loved ones in nursing homes endure time apart

Source:

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/covid-19-loneliness-isolation-among-elderly-safe-distancing-12611158>

CONCEPTUALISING SOLUTIONS: WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THESE CHALLENGES?

Who needs us: The **elderly** is a vulnerable group in many ways

- Vulnerable to complications from COVID-19
- Disruption to personal and social lives – no marketing, no group exercises, no coffee with friends and neighbours, possibly no access to videoconferencing technology linking them to family

What others have done: **Government and various non-governmental organisations/ social service agencies** have stepped in

- Silver Generations Ambassadors visiting the elderly to educate them on COVID-19 precautionary measures
- Calls from NGOs to chat and check on their well-being
- Home visit for certain seniors

For the elderly in healthcare institutions (e.g. Nursing Homes for those who need long-term nursing care; Hospices for critically ill patients on end-of-life care)

- Face disruption to familiar routines – no more visitors, restrictions on group activities
- Restrictions on visitations – unable to see family members, especially painful for critically ill patients who cannot see some family members in person for one last time.

The various healthcare institutions have found ways to alleviate some of this isolation felt by the elderly

- Schedule daily videoconferencing with family members, albeit only short 10-minute calls
- Control measures on visitation e.g. hospices might only allow 4 designated visitors, and only 2 at one time – balancing control measures with visitation on compassionate grounds
- Home/day care hospice – frequently virtual check-ins with elderly, live cooking shows for the elderly at home, use tablets/TV to teach elderly how to engage in their games/exercises, meal delivery, penpal initiatives

**NEIGHBOURS
"GATHERING"
ONLINE**

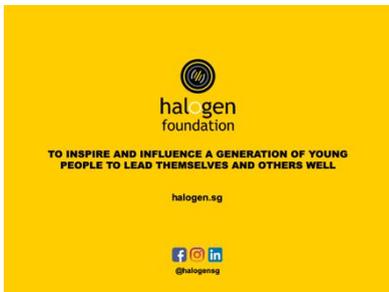


**REACHING OUT TO OTHERS =
THEY FEEL LESS ISOLATED.**

AND SO WILL WE.

**HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY
FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES
DURING THIS TIME?**

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What others have done: FriendzoneSG is a ground-up **community-building initiative** aimed at bringing people within the same neighbourhood together

- With COVID-19, they are bringing the same initiative online
- Various timeslots have been set up for people in different neighbourhoods to “gather” and connect with one another
- Opportunity to interact, make new friends, offer support to those struggling with various issues while in isolation

[Discussion]

Win Together:

How can I be a support my friends and loved ones during this time?

- Possible follow-up questions:
 - Who seems to be struggling? What are they struggling with?
 - We may be physically isolated, but we can still be socially connected – how can I find new ways of connecting with friends and family?
 - How about your neighbours? When did you last check in on them?
 - Do you have any “old” friends whom you haven’t talked to for a long time – can this be a good time to reconnect?
- Possible areas to think about:
 - Dropping a simple text to check in
 - Initiating videoconferences – play multiplayer online games together!
 - Teach the elderly in your homes how to use videoconferencing apps
 - Someone’s birthday? Or planning a surprise? Order a cake to their house!

Digital Interaction ideas:

- Forum Posts/Padlet – Allow for more in-depth discussion

End