

Talking through a Pandemic

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USU researchers examine how interpersonal communication has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and what that means for CDC guidelines

By: *Kelsie Holman, CHaSS Communications Student Journalist*

USU researchers John Seiter, Ph.D. and Tim Curran, Ph.D. have been investigating the role communication plays during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We were looking for solutions to some of the problems we are seeing now,” said Curran, “including what compels people to stop following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

As the pandemic continues, it is more important than ever to follow CDC guidelines and keep up with regulations. These have been easier to comply with for some people than others.

Seiter and Curran asked people about how lonely, depressed, and worried they were about their relationships due to COVID-19. They also examined these people’s communication styles and whether they followed or ignored the CDC guidelines for COVID-19.

Their research concluded that people who are hesitant about using Zoom and other online forms of communication are more likely to ignore CDC guidelines in order to achieve social assurance and reduce their loneliness. People who are more apprehensive feel less certain in their relationships and will seek out traditional forms of communication in order to worry less.

“It is important, especially in times like this, to give the people you love the assurance that your relationship is still solid, even though you can’t pursue normal avenues of communication,” said Seiter.

“This is really something we are all in together. Humans are social creatures, and we need to learn to use our communication skills as a resource during times when we can’t traditionally communicate,” said Curran.

While the vaccine is starting to be distributed that does not mean it is any less important to follow the guidelines given to us.

“Over time, people grow weary of social distancing and will want to be laxer with the guidelines, but it is more important than ever to follow them. We don’t always have enough resources to support huge spikes in infections, so we must all do our part to contribute to the solution,” said Seiter.

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