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## Advice for people at risk of committing a sexual or violent offence while in social isolation

By Kieran McCartan, PhD, & David Prescott, LICSW

In recent weeks we have all considered social distancing and the need to stay at home. We know, however, that home is not always the safest place for everyone. Some of our previous blogs have looked at managing isolation and our wellbeing, as well as advice for practitioners (from our sister organization NOTA) on how to support our clients effectively in the community. Today, we explore management techniques for people at risk of committing sexual offences, either potential first-time offences or possible relapse offences, because we know that social isolation can lead to offence-related and pre-offence behaviours.

Recently, there have been reports of how instances of sexual abuse, online and in person, and domestic abuse is going to increase during the COVID-19 crisis along with concerns of potential victims and related individuals being put at risk. In the UK we have seen our first COVID-19 related domestic homicides. Therefore, if we want to prevent sexual and domestic abuse at the minute, what support can we offer people at risk?

**Maintain a daily routine** – as much as possible try to keep to a structured, “normal” routine of work and other activities. It’s important to keep structure in your life. In addition, you should continue to take medication, if you are on any, as well as moderate your alcohol and food intake.

**Maintain pro-active, positive self-care techniques** – whether this be exercise, yoga, meditation, exercise, or other relaxing activities, these are important to keep up as they balance our mood and behaviour.

**Be aware of your mood and behaviour** – You should pay extra attention to your mood and responses to situations around



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### **SAJRT Bloggers’ Profile**

*We are longtime members of ATSA dedicated to furthering the causes of evidenced-based practice, understanding, and prevention in the field of sexual abuse.*

*The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers is an international, multi-disciplinary organization dedicated to preventing sexual abuse. Through research, education, and shared learning ATSA promotes evidence based practice, public policy, and community strategies that lead to the effective assessment, treatment, and management of individuals who have sexually abused or are risk to abuse.*

*The views expressed on this blog are of the bloggers and are not necessarily those of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research & Treatment, or Sage Journals.*

yourself. Being aware of how you are interacting with others, your attitude and behaviours towards others, and what current and emerging triggers might influence you.

**Frank conversations** – if you are socially isolating with other family or friends, have honest conversations about how you are feeling, so that they (and you) can manage the situation more effectively.

**Find a “quiet space”** – It’s important to have space and time to yourself, especially if you feel more at risk. Carve out some time and space for yourself at home so that you are able to process your triggers and issues more effectively. Make sure that others know what and where this is.

**Seek external support where necessary** – if you feel that you are losing control and that your regular management plans are not working, then please look to external sources for support and advice. These may be members of your household, your extended network, or professional support if necessary. Although we are being told not to venture out, a lot of resources are still available. Whether these are through an established relationship with a therapist, anonymous phone lines (Stop it now UK, Stop it now USA, StopSO), or even webpages (Lucy Faithful Foundation, Safer Lives, Safer Living Foundation, Upstream, Global Prevention Project) please use them. As just one example, Stop It Now! In the US recently produced a column at their website on how parents can find safe child care in emergencies.

- One place we can take heart is that although none of us knows exactly how we are going to get through this, we do know that we will.