

SOCIAL DISTANCING



Have you avoided being in company? Have you started talking to yourself? Do you love being on your own? Have you been thriving on the lockdown? Did you enjoy not seeing your relatives as they can be a real pain in the neck? Have you lost touch of your friends? Do you take pride in sabotaging team meetings and teamwork? Have you started hiding from your colleagues and committed yourself to reducing contact with them to the ultimate minimum, that is to say, zero contact – bupkis, not a sausage? Have you developed the highly sophisticated skill of ignoring other people’s social endeavours? In other words: Have you become a ghost who can’t be reached by anyone? If the answer to some or ideally all of the above questions is YES, that’s smashing for a start.

However, in addition, you need to be vigilant to avoid getting soft. If you’d like to be virally safe you need to suppress your childish and immature need for socializing and for having relationships. Just make it a habit and after a while it will come to you naturally. You are very likely to develop a healthy social phobia which will be conducive to your evolving into a socially distanced modern hermit.

Social distancing comes easily and naturally to some people. According to a government survey in Japan about one and a half per cent of the Japanese population has adopted a hermit-like lifestyle.

But in Japan half a million people live as modern-day hermits. They are known as hikikomori – recluses who withdraw from all social contact and often don’t leave their houses for years at a time. A government survey found roughly 541,000 (1.57% of the population) but many experts believe the total is much higher as it can take years before they seek help.
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However, the actual number of people who have become “their own island”, is presumably much higher. In Japan, these people are known – or rather not known – as hikikomori. It’s a safe bet that this social phenomenon, which has got the potential to erase any virus, is not just limited to Japan. Hence, whatever country you live in, there is hope. If they can do it, you can do it as well. Resolve to learn by example.

There’s a bit of a catch though. How do you learn from someone who has successfully cornered themselves into a communicative dead end? The trick is to find them just before they are about to drift off for good. Watch them before they are sucked into a black hole of socially isolated, blissfully safe desperation. Watch and learn how they get spaghettified – one noodle at a time. Keep your distance before you follow them.

Don’t rush it. Be patient and hold on until you feel the time is right. Breathe deeply, gather your courage, get hold of your lightsaber, your broom and your imaginary baby elephant. Now, take a running jump towards your blissfully isolated and virus-free island. There’s a personal, dedicated offshore spot waiting for every single human being. Just take it and don’t you ever leave it.

(go and) take a running jump	<i>said to someone when you want them to go away and stop annoying you:</i> He kept following me around, so I just told him to go and take a running jump.
bustle	<i>busy activity:</i> the bustle of the downtown business district
bustle	a cushion or a metal or whalebone framework worn by women in the late 19th century at the back below the waist in order to expand the skirt
clairvoyance	<i>the power to see the future or to see things that other people cannot see:</i> He believed in clairvoyance and magnetic healers.
crinoline	<i>a stiff frame worn under a woman's skirt to give it a full appearance, especially in the 19th century:</i> If only I had a crinoline to sweep down the grand staircase in! /'krɪn.əl.ɪn/
drift off	<i>to gradually start to sleep:</i> I couldn't help drifting off in the middle of that lecture - it was so boring!
endeavor	<i>an attempt to do something:</i> In spite of our best endeavors, it has proven impossible to contact her.
ghosting	<i>a way of ending a relationship with someone suddenly by stopping all communication with them:</i> It feels terrible to be a victim of ghosting.
grappled with	<i>to hold someone while fighting with him or her:</i> He briefly grappled with the police officer.
haunt	<i>showing signs of suffering or severe anxiety:</i> He had a haunted look about him.
hermit	a person who lives alone and apart from the rest of society, especially for religious reasons
hikikomori	But in Japan half a million people live as modern-day hermits. They are known as hikikomori – recluses who withdraw from all social contact and often don't leave their houses for years at a time. A government survey found roughly 541,000 (1.57% of the population) but many experts believe the total is much higher as it can take years before they seek help. www.bbc.com
hikikomori	In Japan modern-day hermits are known as hikikomori. Stephan Freilinger
hikikomori	(in Japan) the abnormal avoidance of social contact, typically by adolescent males. www.lexico.com
hustle and bustle	<i>noise and activity:</i> I love the hustle and bustle of the marketplace.
inadvertently	<i>in a way that is not intentional:</i> He inadvertently deleted the file.
John Donne	No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.
lightsaber	a fictional weapon in the Star Wars universe which is like a sword that can cut through almost anything
lockdown	a situation in which people are not allowed to enter or leave a building or area freely because of an emergency
offshore	away from or at a distance from the coast

oppress	<i>to govern people in an unfair and cruel way and prevent them from having opportunities and freedom:</i> For years now, the people have been oppressed by a ruthless dictator.
outcast	<i>An outcast is someone who is not accepted by a group of people or by society:</i> He had always been an outcast, unwanted and alone. All of us felt like social outcasts.
pariah	a person who is not accepted by a social group, especially because he or she is not liked, respected, or trusted /pəˈraɪ.ə/
plight	<i>an unpleasant condition, especially a serious, sad, or difficult one:</i> Few of us can be unmoved by the plight of the refugees.
presumably	<i>used to say what you think is the likely situation:</i> They can presumably afford to buy a bigger apartment.
proffer	<i>to offer something by holding it out, or to offer advice or an opinion:</i> He shook the warmly proffered hand.
psychic	a person who has a special mental ability, for example being able to know what will happen in the future or what people are thinking
recluse	EINSIEDLER <i>a person who lives alone and avoids going outside or talking to other people:</i> He is a millionaire recluse who refuses to give interviews.
revelation	<i>to be an extremely pleasant surprise:</i> This book came as a complete revelation to me.
spaghettification	PHYSICS the theoretical process by which an object approaching a black hole is progressively broken down into a long thin string of particles by increasing gravitational forces, esp the vast difference in gravitational strength at either end of the object
spaghettification	the process by which (in some theories) an object would be stretched and ripped apart by gravitational forces on falling into a black hole
stem	<i>to stop something unwanted from spreading or increasing:</i> These measures are designed to stem the rise of violent crime.
suppress	<i>to prevent something from being seen or expressed or from operating:</i> She couldn't suppress her anger/annoyance/delight.
though	<i>despite this:</i> We went to high school together. I haven't seen her for years, though.
vigilant	<i>always being careful to notice things, especially possible danger:</i> Following the bomb scare at the airport, the staff have been warned to be extra vigilant.