<https://www.nasa.gov/hrp/social-isolation/in-context>

Social Isolation in Context

NASA astronauts have been flying to space for more than 50 years and for nearly [20 years](https://www.nasa.gov/feature/nasa-counts-down-to-twenty-years-of-continuous-human-presence-on-international-space-station), crew members have been staying in space for months-long missions living on the [International Space Station](https://www.nasa.gov/feature/facts-and-figures) with only a few other people in about as much space as a six-bedroom house. Astronauts experience various aspects of social isolation and confinement during their missions.

NASA carefully selects crew members and trains and supports them to ensure they can work effectively as a team for six months. NASA also studies how isolation and confinement can alter astronauts’ individual and team health and performance as well as tests strategies to mitigate any negative impacts. These isolation studies are conducted with astronauts in space as well as in [analog facilities](https://www.nasa.gov/analogs) such as the Human Exploration Research Analog (HERA), the NEK facility in Moscow, and field locations in Antarctica.

Astronaut Anne McClain shared tips for cultivating skills and behaviors to successfully [live in confined spaces](https://www.nasa.gov/feature/an-astronaut-s-tips-for-living-in-space-or-anywhere) for long periods of time.

The space station is not too far from home, orbiting about 250 miles above Earth. NASA is preparing for more ambitious missions that will take astronauts farther away to the [Moon and Mars](https://www.nasa.gov/topics/moon-to-mars), which also will require longer missions. NASA has identified and studies five categories of stress on the [human body in space](https://www.nasa.gov/hrp/bodyinspace), one of which is isolation and confinement. Experiences of isolation and confinement will only be magnified during such missions when communication delays and distance from Earth are increasing. Communication during Artemis missions to the Moon and human exploration to Mars will have to be different. One of the lessons we have learned from life aboard the International Space Station is that it is important for crews and family members to manage expectations.

NASA has been studying people in isolated and confined environments for years, and has developed methods and technologies to counteract possible problems. Astronauts can objectively assess the effect of fatigue on performance with a five-minute [self-test](https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/research/experiments/explorer/Investigation.html?#id=955). [Journals](https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/research/experiments/explorer/Investigation.html?#id=964) give them a safe place to write about their frustrations and give researchers a tool to study behavioral issues and other things that are on the minds of crew members who are living and working in isolation and confinement. All of these methods and technologies will help us prepare for longer, farther exploration missions.