

Live Well Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life

SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

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The need for social distancing has put a pause on normal socializing activities, like family get-togethers, restaurant outings and music concerts. As the pandemic continues, social distancing doesn't need to mean social isolation. If you don't address it, isolation and loneliness during the pandemic may pose a risk to your mental health.

Why It Matters

Social connectivity is the feeling of closeness and connectedness to a community. Every connection has a lasting impact on our physical and mental health—so it's especially important during this time to focus on connectivity to support both yourself and others in your community.

Research shows that people who take part in meaningful, productive and social activities generally live longer, have a sense of purpose and maintain a better mood. Additionally, social connectedness has the following health benefits:

- Strengthened immune system
- Increased feelings of happiness
- Improved memory and cognitive skills
- Increased motivation for self-care
- Decreased levels of stress hormones

Staying connected virtually can help ease stress, reduce suffering and promote overall wellness. Regardless of whether you're introverted or extroverted, everyone needs a varying amount of social contact to maintain their mental and physical health.

Staying Socially Connected

As social distancing continues to be a pandemic guideline from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, you may need to get creative to maintain social connections or reconnect with your network. Consider the following strategies:

- **Embrace technology**—Stay virtually connected with friends and loved ones through video calls, social media and other apps. A simple phone call can help as well.
- **Never stop learning**—Consider attending virtual classes or events to keep learning and meet new people with similar interests.
- **Get moving**—Exercise can make you feel energized and less stressed. Schedule a virtual or outdoor workout class and sweat with friends or your fitness community. Make it a daily goal to move, even if it's walking or doing chores. Anything counts.



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- **Take it outside**—Driveways, yards and sidewalks make it easier to set boundaries while allowing neighbors and friends to get outside and connect, while practicing social distancing.
- **Send snail mail**—Kids and adults can connect with their pen pals or family with handwritten letters. Get creative and decorate the letter or envelope before dropping it in the mailbox.
- **Volunteer**—If you are healthy, support nonprofits, help food banks or donate blood. Also consider helping others who live alone or seniors who may need extra help with regular tasks, like groceries.
- **Get creative**—Think about activities that you enjoyed before the pandemic and adapt them for an online setting. You may have to get creative to stay connected, but the health benefits are worth it.

The above tips focus on connections outside of your household, but don't forget about connections with those at home. Find new ways to reconnect and have fun together—such as doing puzzles, cooking, baking, playing games or learning life skills.

If you're feeling isolated and are worried about your mental or physical well-being, please contact a doctor or health professional.