

Staying Socially Connected

As the whole world comes to terms with self-isolation and the never-ending news updates of the pandemic we are dealing with. It important to stay connected to our loved ones near and far. This is a time where it is normal to feel lonely, to be afraid, to be anxious. However, we must remember everyone is going through these emotions and feelings.

COVID-19 has disrupted our routine and that includes our social habits from saying hello to the bus driver on the way to work, going to a group exercise class, meeting friends for drinks, visiting family members. To combat those feelings and fill the void of not having social connection technology is playing its part.

Technology has many positives and negatives, but this is an area where it can really help us. Focus on using it the best way to stay connected while being apart. Sharing love and kindness doesn't cost anything.



How to stay connected

- 1) Video Calls** – We may not be able to see people physically, but we have FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Zoom, WhatsApp or Houseparty. From video calling your best friend, to your group of friends or your family members it allows us keep in touch.
Set a daily time to video call those important to you.
- 2) Audio** – Voice memos allows you to connect more than a simple text message. It's a great method to use when video/phone calls are unavailable. You still get to hear the persons voice.
New to voice memos, decide with a friend to use voice memo instead of text message.
- 3) Text** – Creating group chats for text messaging can be fun to reach out to everyone together. It allows for conversation, humour, activities and information to be passed through. You can engage when it suits you, but chances are there is someone always there to respond.
If you are in a group chat, be it friends, co-workers, clubmates or family, send a message to the group to check in. It may be a link to something funny or the trending challenges right now to get the conversation started.

- 4) **Old School Phone Calls** – Remember our older generations may not be ‘tech savvy’ like the rest of us. They may be used to having visitors or going out to the local shop or coffee shop to meet people.
Pick up the phone and take 10 minutes to reach out to a grandparent, parent or neighbour.
- 5) **Letters/Cards/Packages** – Many decades ago sending post was our only way of contact, it doesn’t matter how old you are, it’s always nice to get something in the post. For some people their loved ones may be in a different city, province, country or continent.
Send a small gesture to someone far away from you to remind them they are in your thoughts. Or closer to home leave a note in a neighbour’s letter box to check in on them.
- 6) **Social Media** – There is an endless amount of ways to stay connected through social media, be it Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat. With using social media, it can act a link to people all over the world, but it can as act as a dangerous tool to our mental health.
Limit your time scrolling, this may be easier said than done. Try setting yourself an amount of time to look at your news feeds, with many being on the topic of COVID-19 it can be overwhelming. When reading updates on COVID-19 ensure they are reputable sources.

Let’s limit our COVID-19 chat and change it up to be that ray of sunshine 😊

As we keep in touch with our friends and family, a habit that is natural to us all is to spend the time discussing COVID-19 developments, government announcements and news from around the world. To enjoy your time with those you reach out avoid that discussion and do something fun! It will occupy your thoughts and help relieve stress and anxiety. Below are ideas to enhance your connection with those important to you.

- 1) Play a Game – Charades/Guess Who/HangMan/Pictionary are games to play over group video calls. Be creative and invent your own game.
- 2) Netflix Party – Netflix allows you and friends to all watch your favourite movie and show together but apart.
- 3) Have a dinner date – Organise with someone to both make dinner while facetimeing. Sit down together and enjoy your food and company.
- 4) Have Friday night drinks over zoom – instead of drinks at the bar, change it to drinks at home.
- 5) Struggling to motivate yourself to workout at home, set a meeting in your calendar with a buddy to workout together or join a live stream.
- 6) For your children set a video call for them to have a play date with friends, decide on an activity they can do together but still apart.
- 7) Replace your usually morning commute time to getting a walk and talk in. Pick someone new each morning to reach out to.
- 8) Start a gratitude journal in your group chats – Get everyone to write up one thing they are grateful for each morning. It’ll bring the group together and appreciate the little things in life.
- 9) TikTok is trending right now! Set a challenge with your friends to post a TikTok video.
- 10) Send a throwback photo to a friend or group to remember the good times you’ve had and the look ahead to those to come.