



▶▶ Staying Connected During Physical Distancing

Evidence shows that physical distancing helps curb the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). However, the subsequent loneliness that comes from at-home quarantining can lead to anxiety, fear, anger and depression, even despair. It's important to remember that maintaining physical space between you and other people doesn't have to limit your social interactions. You can adjust and even thrive in this new environment by accepting temporary lifestyle restrictions, which may require some creativity in order to reframe what socializing looks like. Technology can support these new practices and offer a powerful lifeline when you may need it most.

Here are some recommendations for staying connected during the COVID-19 crisis:

Connect with others “face-to-face” while in different places

Talking on the phone and sending messages over text or social media are great ways to stay in touch with others while physical distancing, but relationships also need face-to-face interactions. Facial cues, body language and nonverbal forms of communication are important for bonding. Opt for video chats whenever possible and use this time as an opportunity to try out new ways of connecting virtually with friends and family. Try having a virtual happy hour with friends, a remote book club meeting or even a digital dinner with someone you met on a dating app.

Give small virtual acts of kindness each day

Getting a surge of “likes” on social media can feel great in the moment, but sincere and thoughtful messages are often even more memorable and meaningful for the recipient. Reaching out with a personalized message doesn't take much time or additional effort, so when you find yourself scrolling through friends' social media posts, take it one step further and send along a few thoughtful words. After all, everyone could use a little extra kindness.

Cultivate virtual communities

Sharing common interests or bonding over shared experiences can lay the foundation for strong relationships. Whatever your interests may be, there are innumerable online communities of people all over the world who share your passions and are eager to connect with others. Additionally, there are many digital support groups that offer empathy and advice for people facing new experiences and challenges – such as groups for new parents, those working through grief, and people living with rare diseases. Use online networks to engage around what matters most to you.

Deepen and broaden your relationships

Strengthening existing relationships and forming new ones are two great ways to overcome loneliness. Take steps to reconnect with old friends or family members who live apart from you. You can also broaden your social network by reaching out to someone you'd like to get to know better.

Help is available 24/7: If you or someone you know is having difficulty coping with the added stresses of COVID-19, call the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) Help Line at 1-800-854-7771 or text “LA” to 741741.

LACDMH is here to help if any of the following applies:

- You feel isolated, anxious, fearful and/or depressed, and your symptoms worsen or become unmanageable.
- You find yourself having severe depressive thoughts due to fear and/or isolation, and you are afraid you might, intentionally or unintentionally, harm yourself or someone else.
- You are in a relationship where there is domestic violence that risks your safety and well-being and/or that of the children in your home.
- Someone you know is being harmed or neglected.