



# KEEP IN TOUCH

We are used to having built-in ways to connect - school, work, events, social activities, and even simple errands like going to the grocery store. We are used to visiting and socializing as part of our everyday life. For the time being, this is no longer a built-in feature of our lives. We have to make an effort to stay connected and we have to be creative about the ways we connect.

## Make it part of your routine.

Set a time, or several times, over the course of the day, and call it “social connection time.” This will be a dedicated time when you forego all distractions and check in or share with others—like on your morning walk.

Just like you would a meeting (or a dentist appointment) write the time in your calendar or put an alert on your phone. “At such and such an hour, I’m going to reach out to a friend, colleague or family member.” They want to hear from you right now.

## Let yourself be vulnerable.

If you’re craving connection, let others know. Let them know you feel isolated. Deepening your conversations will deepen your relationships.

## Be honest.

If you’re not doing well, don’t cover over your feelings. Share them openly.

## Be generous & kind.

Kindness can actually work to counter stress which is particularly important in these times. Send out a few words of gratitude on social media or send a kind message via email. This will make someone’s day and is itself a meaningful connection.

## Practice listening.

Really listen to each other and give the other person space to let you know how they are really feeling, too.

Learning to listen actively and carefully is key to having meaningful social interaction.

## Think outside your circle!

Your family members and good friends aren’t the only sources of social support. Who has offered you support in the past? This might be a good time to reconnect.

## Join a virtual community.

Go ahead and join a group, virtually. There are Facebook groups on just about everything and now is a good time to find community.

## Remember low-tech ways.

The phone may have been invented two centuries ago, but it is one of the most enduring and important tools for social connection that we have. Letter writing maybe a lost art too.

## Make the most of high-tech.

Use video technologies, like Facebook, WhatsApp, or Skype. Sign up for free. All you need is a computer with a camera, or a smart phone. Don’t be shy: video is face-to-face time. If you still feel shy: turn off the video view of yourself. This might help lighten feelings of self-consciousness.

## Plan a virtual event.

Participating in group activities can bring you closer to your friends, family, and members of your community. Here is a partial list of social activities you could host on Zoom: dinner party, play date, singalong, game night, trivia contest, book club meeting, coffee breaks or slide shows! Be creative, laugh at yourself and learn from your mistakes as we muddle through this new way of connecting— together.

## If you’re struggling: Find a support group.

With a simple Google search you can find online support groups and peer support services to engage on issues that matter most to you. Or get some peers together and host your own support group.

Source: <https://mentalhealthweek.ca/your-social-distancing-survival-guide/>