

How to maintain social connections while being physically distant

Adapted from Mayo Clinic

Everyone needs a varying amount of real social contact to maintain his or her mental and physical health. As we adjust to “social distancing” strategies, we may need to be more creative to meet our need for social connection.

It is important to understand that “social distancing” does not mean withdrawing from society. It is an invitation to contribute and connect in another way to the communities we live in. We can think about maintaining connection in two ways: internally and externally.



EXTERNAL STRATEGIES

External strategies for maintaining connection can be thought of as creative ways we can safely communicate through our senses of sight, hearing, taste and touch. Some examples of safe connection using the senses are:

- Use electronics to stay in contact with friends, neighbors and loved ones. This could include using videoconference programs, making voice calls instead of sending texts or talking with a neighbor through windows while maintaining a safe distance.
- Spend quality time with the people you live with, such as playing board games or completing an indoor project.
- Make a family meal or dessert recipe that reminds you of friends or family you are unable to visit, and then call them to tell them about it. This way, you get an experience of internal and external connection.
- Write in a journal about your experiences during this time of social distancing. Not only will this help you sort out what you are thinking and feeling, but also it can be shared going forward as a way for future generations to connect with the past.

INTERNAL STRATEGIES

Internal strategies for maintaining connection can create a sense of shared meaning that connects us to our community through our experiences and shared community values. Some ways to create shared meaning include:

- Recognize we do not live in isolation. Our interconnectedness and choices affect others in our community, which affects people in neighboring communities, regions and so on.
- Identify friends and loved ones in your life who you are protecting by using a social distancing strategy.
- Recognize how you are protecting others by protecting people close to you.
- Think about what personal and community protection means to you. How does this feel? What value does this represent?
- Spend time sensing and feeling the importance of living your community values in your mind and body.
- Inspire, encourage and recognize others for following protective strategies at work; at home; and through electronic means, such as calls, videoconferences and social media.



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