

5 Ways to Make Social Distancing More Social

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Few of us had heard the phrase “social distancing” at the beginning of the year. But now, maintaining safe, hygienic spaces that help limit the spread of the coronavirus is part of our lives. I hope this is short-lived, but in the meantime, we should do everything we can to thrive during this time.

Here are 5 ideas on how to make social distancing a little less isolating:

1. Set a schedule.

We advise all our newly retired clients to set a schedule that will give retirement a little bit of structure. Doing so keeps new retirees active and engaged as they explore new ways to fill time without their 9 to 5s. It also helps keep retired spouses from driving each other crazy!

Whether you're retired or not, you're going to need to rethink how you spend your days for the foreseeable future, especially if you're working from home or still have kids in the house who need help with school.

If you're struggling to work out a schedule, start small and have 3 goals for each day. Be sure to make some of these social in nature, not just your house repair punch list. There are numerous daily journals and planners (both electronics and paper) available to help provide some structure to your day. Write them down and check them off.

2. Get outside!

So far, the government hasn't put restrictions on getting some fresh air. Sitting in the backyard, firing up the grill, or throwing a ball around can help you and any family you're isolated with to get the blood pumping and feel a little more normal.

Depending on social distancing guidelines in your community, you're probably allowed to walk, jog, or bike through your neighborhood or a park as well. Just remember to keep a six-foot buffer between you and other folks and avoid touching surfaces like fences and playgrounds.

Remember, the coronavirus situation is different from state to state and even town to town. Check with your local health department for the latest social distancing guidelines.

3. Enjoy some facetime on FaceTime.

Services like FaceTime and Zoom can host group video calls. Many folks have started hosting weekly video calls to connect with friends and family across the country. Your group can even use these services to play games, watch movies, or listen to music together.

As you're working on a new routine, consider scheduling your own weekly family video calls. And if you have older friends and family members who live alone, use whatever tech they're comfortable with to check in as often as you can. Social distancing is going to be especially hard on folks who might feel isolated, to begin with.

We often don't call people because we worry about bothering them or interrupting their day. People are longing for connection, and they aren't exactly "on the go" like they were a few weeks ago.

4. Learn from the best.

Yes, it's essential to stay informed. But if you spend too much of your day glued to anxious social media and news feeds, you're just going to get more anxious yourself.

Instead, click or swipe over to some of the remarkable ways that folks are connecting, educating, and entertaining online. Many libraries, magazines, museums, and news organizations have lifted their digital paywalls. Artists are offering free online instruction in painting and drawing. Gyms and yoga studios are organizing online exercise groups. Musicians are performing online concerts. World-famous chefs are offering cooking classes. Actors and actresses are reading animated books to children.

These might not be ideal circumstances, but with so many big-hearted pros sharing their skills

online, for free, this is a great time to explore a new hobby or dig a little deeper into a topic that interests you.

5. Perform random acts of kindness.

There's power in putting goodwill out into the world. And right now, we could all use some!

In your own home, something as simple as cooking a nice meal for your stressed-out spouse or performing a chore that's not usually on your to-do list could go a long way toward keeping things upbeat. You might even decide to tackle cleaning, painting, or reorganizing projects together that will freshen up your home.

As for the loved ones you aren't isolated with, think of little ways to show you care. Commit to those weekly family calls. Send a greeting card or handwritten letter. Check-in on your neighbors, especially the elderly or immunocompromised, and see if there's anything you can do to help without breaching safe social distancing.

Your community could benefit from some kindness, as well. Small businesses, restaurants, and artists are really hurting right now. Buying gift cards, merchandise, and to-go meals can help these businesses stay operational and keep a few more people working. That singer you saw in your local café can't perform live right now, but she probably has an album you can buy online.

For our part, we plan to keep our usual channels of communication wide open. We'll stay in touch with emails, calls, videos, blog posts, and podcasts to share information that we hope helps you cope with social distancing and the other challenges of the coronavirus pandemic.

All the best!

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