

Connecting in New Ways!

Feeling connected to people can be a big motivator to keep going, especially when times are hard. Our circles of support – whether it be family, friends, coworkers, teammates, church members, or others – help us to manage stress and feel less alone. They can even bring humor, fun, and perspective to the most trying situations.

Safe, positive relationships are good for both our mental and physical health. Some relationships provide us with emotional support (e.g. my BFF is my go-to person) or spiritual support (e.g. my mom's group fills me with encouragement), whereas other relationships provide information (e.g. my nana gives the best advise) or physical help (e.g. my brother gives me rides and picks things up for me). These trusting relationships help build us up and fill many needs for us. They also give us a sense of meaning and connection, especially when we are able to provide support in return.



In order to keep each other healthy right now and slow the spread of the coronavirus, we are being asked to distance ourselves physically from other people, which means no handshakes, hugs, or high fives and staying at least 6 feet away from each other at all times. This physical distance reduces our risk of getting and spreading the virus, but it does not mean that we can't still support one another.

We must find new and different ways to connect with people and lean on our communities. It's natural to feel anxious, frustrated, upset, doubtful, or any other mixture of emotions. These changes can be challenging to accept and adjust to.

Thankfully, we still have ways we can stay connected from a distance, like:

- 1 Having video chats.** FaceTime, Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, and so many other apps are available to connect you by video with your family and friends, so you can see each other's faces. If you're not sure how to use these apps, just ask your kids!
- 2 Making a phone call.** Perhaps a little more old school, but phone calls are still a great way to catch up.
- 3 Watching a movie together.** Try having a [Netflix Party](#), sharing your screen in a Zoom meeting, or creating a group text while you're watching your favorite flick together.
- 4 Walking together.** Get outside and take a walk with your family. Just make sure to maintain your physical distance.
- 5 Connecting with your kids.** This could look like making dinner together, playing board games, having a picnic, hanging out in their space, or reading books together. Remember that you are their primary connection.

How are you staying connected?

Sometimes, out of sight is out of mind.

If this is the case, try filling out an **eco-map** (like the picture below) to see you or your child's social network – all of the people who you interact with.

Start by drawing circles for each of the members of your immediate family. Then work your way out by drawing circles for your friends and classmates and other people in your community. You can even make the circles bigger or closer for the people you interact with the most.

Have you found a way to connect with them all lately?

