

# 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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## APPS TO HELP MAINTAIN SOCIAL CONNECTIONS



**WhatsApp (whatsapp.com)** is a popular platform that allows you to send text messages and make phone calls (with or without video). The app also enables you to send and receive videos, documents, and voice messages.



**Snapchat (snapchat.com)** offers a way to send fun messages and short videos. The app features filters that augment images by adding silly hats, eyes, noses, voices, and stickers. You can take a number of “snaps” and send them in chronological order for a “story” that you share with others. Another feature: messages are automatically deleted after a brief time. You can also use Snapchat to send standard text messages and make video phone calls.



**Google Duo (duo.google.com)** is a video conferencing platform. You can make video calls to just one person or with up to eight people. You can also leave video messages for people you call — a nice feature that others can play again and again if they’re missing you.



**FaceTime (apple.com)** is an app that comes preloaded onto any Apple device, including smartphones, desktop computers, and tablets. The app allows you to call people around the world — just one person or as many as 32 people at a time (although you might not see them all at once). If you don’t have an internet connection, this app also works on cellular connections alone. You’ll need your contacts’ phone numbers to contact them. A caveat — this app works only with other Apple devices.

*Note: Android phones also come with built-in apps that enable video calls, although the particular app can vary by phone. Changing from an audio-only call to a video call, no matter which type of Android phone you have, is typically a matter of pressing the video icon on your keypad.*



**Netflix Party (netflixparty.com)**, a new app that’s an extension of Google Chrome, encourages watching movies and TV shows together, even when you’re far apart. The app allows you to watch a program on the Netflix video streaming service at the exact same time as other users, and chat about it in real time.

### Vide Conferencing Platforms:



Two popular platforms include **Zoom (zoom.com)** and **Skype (skype.com)**. Zoom is typically used by schools and businesses because the app can host up to 1,000 people in a video meeting. The app is free with limitations. For example, Zoom is free for calls between two people for 24 hours, and free for up to 100 people for 40 minutes; but there are charges to add additional participants or meeting minutes. Some restrictions and fees are being suspended during the coronavirus crisis. Skype can host up to 50 people at a time, and you can use it with or without video.



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