

Facing the World Together: Moving Beyond “Safer at Home” with Your Loved Ones



As communities around the world are moving beyond “safer at home” restrictions, we’re entering a difficult time. We get mixed messages about what’s safe — and that can lead to a lot of questions. We each have our own comfort level about seeing other people. And for those of us who live with roommates or family, we’re going to experience some big changes at home. As we move away from seeing each other all the time, how will we stay close? And as we start to see people we’ve missed, what’s the best way to reconnect?

Supporting Household Members

For many of us, routines are going to change quickly. At the same time, we may still be worried about getting COVID-19. While some people may feel relieved to get back into social spaces, others may not. They may experience anxiety, stress and irritability. New “firsts” may be especially tough: the first day back at work, the first time hanging out with friends, the first time eating at a restaurant, etc. To make things easier on your loved ones, be open to conversation. Ask them how they feel. Then find ways to support them. This might include taking over tasks that they find particularly stressful. Be sure to practice and encourage self-care and mindfulness too. Check in with your emotions, and do things that bring you joy.

Continuing to Make Time for Each Other

As you start spending more time apart from the people you live with, you may start to feel disconnected. It can be easy to shift all our attention to the people we’ve missed. But be sure to set aside time for your household members, too, for nightly family dinners, weekly movie nights or monthly date nights. Think about the shared hobbies you might have started or rediscovered over the past few months.

Guiding Kids and Teens Through the Transition

The most important thing you can do for kids and teens is make sure they are being safe. Stay up to date on safety recommendations. Tell them what you expect clearly and repeatedly, and supervise as necessary. Make sure kids and teens feel they can talk about their emotions too. Like adults, they may be feeling stressed, anxious or irritable as they venture out into public.

Reconnecting with Non-Immediate Friends and Family

It can be difficult to navigate social interactions right now, as comfort levels vary drastically from person to person. As you're making plans, have open conversations. Ask the people you're meeting with about their feelings and limits. Discuss how you can respect and support one another as you reconnect. And consider social activities that take place outdoors, such as picnics and yard hangouts. Being outdoors tends to make it easier to keep a distance and avoid high-touch surfaces.

Protecting and Caring for At-Risk Loved Ones

Elderly and immunocompromised individuals are the most at risk of contracting COVID-19. So it's recommended that you wait longer before you see them in person. Continue to connect virtually and offer to help with necessities such as picking up groceries and medications. Make plans to see one another in the future so you both have something to look forward to. If you do meet in person, continue taking extra precautions. Wear a face mask and ensure proper social distancing.

As you navigate the "new normal," keep in mind that there are ways to make it easier — on yourself and the people you care about. Be aware of others' emotions and be thoughtful in your approach.

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