

***Tips and Tools to use during social distancing and quarantine to stay in touch with loved ones, reduce anxiety and fear, and remain healthy.***

***Staying in touch***

During the coronavirus pandemic, it is imperative we follow the CDC's recommendation to practice social distancing and even quarantine ourselves from family and loved ones. Taking these strict measures is the best way to avoid exposure to coronavirus and remain healthy.

Although we are separated from our friends and family, there are many ways to stay in touch. If you have a laptop, iPad, or smartphone, here are a few applications to help you stay connected: FaceTime, Zoom, Skype, Google Duo, and Facebook messenger. Zoom is free to use up to 40 minutes for each conference call. You can have up to 32 people at one time on a call. Facebook messenger can have up to 50 people on one call. These apps allow you to see everyone you are talking with and have that personal interaction we are all craving at this time.

With Easter and Passover right around the corner, this is a perfect time to use one of these platforms to virtually have dinner together, even though you are not physically with your family or friends. Make it a priority to stay in touch. Do not let the coronavirus pandemic monopolize your conversation. Enjoy each other's company.

***Reducing or dealing with anxiety or fears***

This is a frightening time. We are in the midst of a pandemic, our state, and most of the world shutting down or on lockdown. The news is repeated over and over on television, in newspapers, and even in our daily conversations. The fear is palpable and can become overwhelming.

***Suggestions to help manage your anxiety***

- *Stay informed, but don't obsessively check the news.* It is imperative to stay well informed by following a reputable news channel but limit how much you watch the news. If possible, only watch it once a day. Please keep in mind there is a lot of misinformation, and this can be disconcerting and compound your anxiety unnecessarily.
- Consult trustworthy sources: Centers for Disease Control <https://www.cdc.gov/>, World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/>, and Maryland Department of Health <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/>.
- Limit how often you check for updates.
- Step away or turn off the television if the news becomes overwhelming.
- Be careful about what information you share; verify it first to avoid spreading false information.
- *Try to focus on things you can control.* You can't control how others react to the pandemic, when it will end, or how it will affect the economy.

***Follow these guidelines***

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, your sleeve, or your elbow.
- Stay home as much as possible. Have your groceries and other necessities, such as medications, delivered. Many pharmacies and grocery stores are providing this free of charge during this time.
- Practice social distancing; keep a six-foot distance from others.
- Wear cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are challenging to maintain.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- If you are sick, stay home, except when seeking medical care.
- Get plenty of sleep, stay well hydrated, and if possible, get some exercise.
- Social media such as Facebook can be a wonderful tool to stay in touch with friends and loved ones. You may find it necessary to limit the use of social media if it is increasing your anxiety. Be mindful of how it is making you feel. Log off for a few days if it is negatively affecting your mood.
- Emotions are contagious. We all need reassurance, advice, and/or sympathy during this crisis. Choose your confidant carefully. If they are extremely anxious or obsessed with continually monitoring this pandemic, they can increase your anxiety. Connect with people who are uplifting, upbeat, and levelheaded.

***Take care of yourself***

- Meditate
- Eat healthy
- Get plenty of sleep
- Maintain a routine as best as you can, especially your sleep schedule
- Stay well hydrated
- Do activities you enjoy
- Get outside and enjoy nature and fresh air if possible
- Exercise

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