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### Navigating Family Gatherings

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# COPING WITH COVID-19

## TIPS FOR NAVIGATING FAMILY GET-TOGETHERS

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Before COVID-19, the days of spending time with family had become a thing of the past. For some, the everyday hustle and bustle of work and competing family member obligations put limits on family time.

COVID-19 offers a chance to slow down, reconnect with one another, and return to the good ole' days when family time was central to instilling family values.



If nothing more, the pandemic has reminded many of the significance of family and the fundamental need for social interaction. Family get-togethers foster greater connectivity and increase opportunities for communication.

### LACK OF SOCIAL INTERACTION

Due to the pandemic-related separation, opportunities for positive social interaction among family members and friends were overhauled due to safety concerns. Close relationships and feeling socially-connected to the people in your life can benefit overall well-being. For individuals, especially those living or quarantining alone,

isolation may take a serious toll on mental health, particularly those already suffering from conditions like depression and anxiety.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the case may be, there is much value in gathering and finding creative, yet safe ways to interact, whether that is in-person or through the use of technology.

### FAMILY INTERACTION

Trying to navigate family gatherings during COVID-19 offers a chance for fun with family and friends, appealing to a wide range of interests while also being safe. Here are some fun things to do as a family:

**Get Outside and Play** – Create time to spend with the family outdoors. Be sure to find an area outside that is open and, at a minimum, six feet away from people with whom you do not regularly interact.



Go on nature hikes, build an outdoor obstacle course, create a backyard waterpark, or create an exercise regimen with chalk on the pavement.

**Neighborhood Walk** – While walking around the neighborhood, play games with children, like “I Spy.” Ask the children to identify the object or describe something, for example, “I spy something red...that makes chirping noises” (Answer: a Cardinal). Also, you can go on a “Five Senses” walk. Ask them to identify five things they can touch, four things they see, three things they hear, two things they smell, and one thing they taste (if applicable).

**Family Discoveries** – Create a scavenger hunt indoors or outdoors using family heirlooms. Make a list of clues for each item; for example, “Every Sunday morning, we cook bacon in this.” A family member should search for the item and reveal the answer—cast iron skillet. Discuss memories associated with the item; for example, the cast iron skillet has been passed down in the family for generations and has cooked thousands of family meals.

**Celebrating Family Recipes** – Make mealtime a family affair using treasured family recipes. Prepare dishes together and talk about the history associated with the recipes. Also, collect recipes and create a cookbook, including treasured family recipes.

**Connect Virtually** – Family members with compromised immune systems, family working in healthcare, and family members who live out of town, have minimal access to social interaction with the family. Finding ways to stay emotionally connected, despite being socially distanced is ideal for preventing exposure to the virus. With access to

various types of technology, there are many ways to connect virtually, such as hosting a virtual movie night using Netflix Party or playing virtual trivia using Kahoot. Set a monthly check-in with family members and connect via phone calls and video calls such as Skype, FaceTime, Facebook Messenger.

Gathering together as a family strengthens relationships, values, and emotional health. Family relationships play a central role in shaping an individual’s well-being.<sup>2</sup> Whether you live alone or with family, gathering together preserves family history and reinforces the bonds shared. Everyone can contribute to a healthy and safe gathering.

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