



Remaining Connected and Overcoming Boredom During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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As the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues, people are being asked to remain at home in an effort to halt the spread of the coronavirus. For some, this can result in feelings of boredom and less connection to others. For individuals with I/DD, this can be particularly difficult as they may not have all of the coping skills they need to engage in self-care. Caregivers who recognize this can help an individual reduce feelings of boredom and disconnection to improve his or her mental well-being and lessen the impact of the ongoing pandemic.

Remaining Connected

The following are some tips for caregivers to help people with I/DD remain connected:

- **Recognize the feelings that people are experiencing as real and understandable.** People who are extroverted may be used to engaging in activities outside the home, as well as frequently contacting their social network. The loss of outside activities can bring about sadness, anxiety and frustration. The loss of contact with others during a time of stress and uncertainty can feel isolating and lonely.
- **Validate people's feelings.** For example, say "It's ok to feel scared when you don't know what's going to happen," or "It's natural and OK to feel confused; a lot of things are different for you right now."
- **"Social distancing" does not mean social separation.** Prioritize staying connected, either virtually or via telephone. Help individuals you support to connect with their friends and family through phone calls, video conferencing, and online meetings. Make a plan of how, when, and with whom the person can get connected, and offer help make arrangements.
 - ❖ **Note:** For people with autism, video conferencing can be uncomfortable, due to the need for eye contact and the novelty of the experience. In this case, a phone call might be a better option. Caregivers and individuals should use their best judgement based on the needs of the individual.
 - ❖ Links to connect individuals to video conference those they miss:
A caregiver may need to copy the link below and paste into the internet browser
 - <https://zoom.us/> (free download)
 - <https://www.skype.com/en/> (free download)
 - <https://duo.google.com/about/> (for android and Apple® users)
 - Facetime® - a video calling application designed for Apple® users
- **Make conversations meaningful.** Talk with the person about his or her feelings, hopes, or fears; be prepared to validate the person's thoughts and feelings. Meaningful conversations deepen a person's connection to others and eases feelings of loneliness.

- **Reframe “social distancing”.** Rather than “social distancing”, think of it as “physical distancing”. Emphasize that physically distancing from each other to stop the spread of disease is a good thing – it helps save lives. By staying away, each person is being a “lifesaver” or a “hero” keeping others safe.

Resources:

How To Be Alone, But Not Lonely, Despite The Coronavirus. NPR Morning edition (March 17, 2020). Retrieved 3-19-20 from <https://www.npr.org/2020/03/17/816691923/how-to-be-alone-but-not-lonely-despite-the-coronavirus>

How to Manage Loneliness During a Pandemic. 3 tips for remaining emotionally connected during social isolation. Psychology Today (March 13, 2020). Retrieved 3-19-20 from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-squeaky-wheel/202003/how-manage-loneliness-during-pandemic>

Overcoming Boredom

There are many ways to fight boredom while practicing social distancing and being at home.

- **Exercise and stretch.** Look for simple ways for the individual to be active, according to his or her ability level. Even something as simple as getting up from a chair and sitting back down or going up and down the stairs several times in a row can be a good workout.
 - ❖ <https://www.specialolympics.org/> School of Strength.
This website has exercise for those who want light exercise and those who want more intense workouts.
- **Get outside.** People may be outdoors, provided they maintain appropriate distance from others (at least 6 feet). Suggest going for a walk in a park, going fishing, or flying a kite. Just be sure to avoid places where others might gather, such as playgrounds and picnic areas.
- **Go for a drive.** Take a mini road trip. Time in the car is an opportunity to chat, listen to music or an audiobook, and enjoy the weather and scenery.
- **Have a dance party.** Encourage the person pick out fun, energizing songs; build a playlist together.
- **Get creative.** If the person enjoys creative projects, suggest creating plays, skits, songs, and/or dance routines to share with the person’s online friends, or make art projects.
- **Practice cooking/baking.** Have fun trying new recipes or perfecting old ones.
- **Do-it-yourself spa.** Turn the bathroom into a spa and have a home spa day.
- **Learn something new.** Explore new topics online together. There are many tutorials on YouTube, as well as blogs and online courses (i.e. Khan Academy). If an individual likes flowers, explore topics about gardening, types of flowers, arranging flowers, or anything else that the person finds interesting.
- **Visit new places.** Take virtual tours of museums and well-known locations in the world.
 - ❖ Virtual Museum Tours
<https://www.wpxi.com/entertainment/see-and-be-seen/bring-learning-10-must-see-virtual-tours/U2BW6Q3YTVAJ5JAERGO4TBXX4M/>

❖ Virtual Landmark Tour

<https://www.theactivetimes.com/virtual-tour-landmark>

Tour almost anything, from the Taj Mahal to The Space Center in Houston, TX.

- **Read.** Reading can be done alone or together. Bring a book or magazine, or share a favorite online blog with the person. Most library websites offer audiobooks available as free downloads.
- **Meditate and reflect.** A variety of online sources are available to help people learn and practice these skills. A video about basic meditation can be found at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMMerxh_12U
- **Watch videos online.** Content available online content can differ from content on TV. Individuals might enjoy watching others play games, talk about topics that interest them, or unbox items.

Resources:

Morgan, H. , 15 Ways To Fight Boredom And Anxiety Amidst The Coronavirus Pandemic. Forbes. (March 17, 2020). Retrieved 3-19-20 from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/heathermorgan/2020/03/17/15-ways-to-fight-boredom-and-anxiety-amidst-the-coronavirus-pandemic/#68396f3515ef>

Collins, S., Ways to avoid boredom during COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing. WSPA news. (Posted: Mar 17, 2020/ Updated: Mar 19, 2020). Retrieved 3-19-20 from <https://www.wspa.com/news/coronavirus/ways-to-avoid-boredom-during-covid-19-pandemic-social-distancing/>