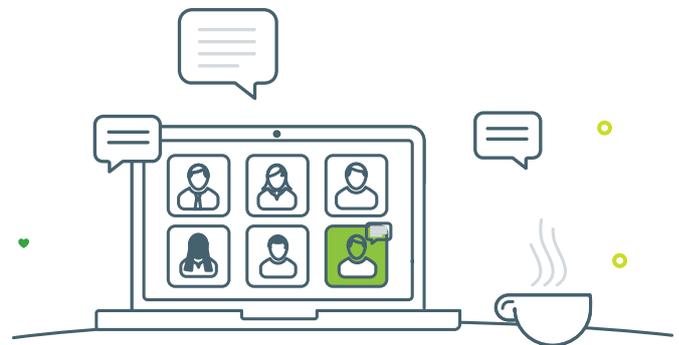


# Mind, body and working at home - *Staying connected*

## Hints, tips and links to keep you and your teams calm, connected and well

Being social animals by nature means the restrictions on meeting up and connecting with family and friends in person at the moment can be extra challenging. With things unlikely to be back to what we think of as 'normal' for some time, it's really important that we find ways to be connected, for the health and wellbeing of both us and those we love. Luckily technology is helping by giving us lots of ways to do this.



In a work setting, being remote workers means we don't have the luxury of body language, bumping into people in hallways or water cooler chat which are both sociable and productive. From a personal point of view, not getting to see family and friends as regularly as usual is challenging, but technology actually offers us the chance to connect more frequently than we otherwise might, particularly as most of us have more free time at the moment.

## Benefits of social connection

As humans we thrive on social interaction and connection to people and the world around us, so suddenly finding ourselves isolated can make us feel disconnected and lonely. Social groups provide an important part of our identity and can actually benefit both our mental and physical wellbeing, making it even more important to try and stay as connected as you can at the moment.

Connections give us a sense of belonging and purpose, which can make us feel happier and improve self-worth and confidence. Even when people we connect with aren't physically present, the fact that we are connecting at all can make us feel supported, valued and loved. Scientific evidence has shown that connecting to other people can also:

- Increase your happiness
- Improve your quality of life and lengthen your lifespan
- Boost mental health
- Strengthen your immune system
- Lower anxiety and depression
- Increase self-esteem, self-worth and confidence

## Ways to connect

We can gain so much from connecting to other people, even remotely; positive relationships and shared activities support our wellbeing. It doesn't need to take up a large part of your day but it will mean a lot to whoever you connect with, spreading a smile and lifting their mood. Whether it's professionally or personally here are some options for building those remote connections.

To keep your team and colleagues connected, why not:

- Introduce daily video calls to check in and plan your day together
- Try weekly virtual coffee or lunch breaks
- Check in frequently, picking up the phone in place of speaking to someone at their desk and don't rely too heavily on email
- Call colleagues for a conversation, not necessarily about work!
- Make sure people know your availability as they can't see whether you're at your desk
- Introduce team activities such as a book club or quiz
- Consider joining up for virtual events such as escape rooms or wine tasting



To keep in touch with family and friends, why not try:

- Weekly family quizzes via Zoom
- Virtual dinner parties or coffee and cake mornings
- Call people more regularly and do it via video so you can see each other and connect more when you talk
- Have WhatsApp Groups so people can share pictures and activities of their days
- Send a card, letter or little something through the post, it'll always put a smile on the recipients face
- Look for ways to spend more quality time with the people you live with

Whether your device of choice is IOS, Android or Microsoft, there are lots of free and compatible ways to do all of these things. A few of the most used at the moment include Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp Video, Cisco Webex, Skype, FaceTime and Houseparty. Some won't be accessible to everyone and they won't all be right for businesses, but there are lots of options so check out the key features to get the right one for you. Make sure your family, friends and colleagues have the same Apps and you're good to go.

These challenging times are forcing us to be more creative with how we keep in touch, but thanks to technology, we can stay connected, keep in touch and continue to be part of our friends and families lives.

## Useful links and further reading

- How to stay connected with your team when working from home  
<https://www.flexjobs.com/employer-blog/stay-connected-team-working-from-home-remotely/>  
<https://www.zenefits.com/workest/how-to-stay-connected-with-your-colleagues-while-working-from-home/>
- Why social connection is important  
<https://www.mindwise.org/blog/uncategorized/the-importance-of-social-connection/>
- Social connections and the brain  
<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/mind-body/staying-sharp/looking-after-your-thinking-skills/social-connections-and-the-brain/>
- Social wellness toolkit  
<https://www.nih.gov/health-information/social-wellness-toolkit>



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