

CONNECTION AND KINDNESS

Connection and kindness is something we all need right now, and as humans, something we are hard-wired to give.

We do need to stay at home to keep ourselves and others safe, but how can we do this and stay connected? If you do go out briefly, for a walk or to the shops, then how can you maximise your positive impact on others on the way?

10 TIPS FOR TRANSMITTING KINDNESS

Here are some quick tips on how to connect with others from 2m distance in under 2 minutes. These might come in handy if you are out walking but can't hug, shake hands, play sport, do hobbies or even have a cuppa together whilst the children play.

- 1 Give a warm greeting – nod your head, sing out, tip your imaginary hat, touch your hand to your heart, clasp hands together at your chest, give a small wave.
- 2 Give a warm smile, lots of eye contact and use their name.
- 3 If it's a person you don't know well, ask a random question – "What's for dinner tonight? Seen any good shows lately? Do you have a pet? Are you growing any herbs? What book are you reading?" Connecting over small talk brings a little bit of the everyday back to what can be a challenging time.
- 4 Share your best (or worst) joke! We all need a little humour in challenging times.
- 5 Ask how they and their family are. Listen to the answer. If they are upset, acknowledge their feelings. It's normal and OK to feel stressed or worried and we're all in this together.
- 6 Provide well wishes. It might feel awkward, but in the midst of a pandemic, this shows care. You can say, "I hope tomorrow is better", or "I'll be thinking of you".
- 7 Ask them if there is anything you can do to help them? You might not be able to do anything but they will feel your kindness in asking.
- 8 Exchange phone numbers so you both have one more neighbourhood contact.

9 Keep it short and sweet – less than 2 min. You can say, "We'd best keep moving, maybe see you again next time."

10 If appropriate, do a fun farewell – do a jig, skip in a circle, curtsy/bow, clap your hands together, air high-5 from a distance.

Try and stay positive, even if feeling miserable – it will lift your spirits and theirs. You may be the only person someone will see outside their household today, so small connections are super important. You will feel better for having made the connection also.

Send us your creative ideas for how to transmit kindness on Instagram @STREATMelbourne

HOW TO CONNECT TO OTHERS WHEN WE FEEL SO DISCONNECTED

Feeling connected to people that care for us is important. These people, and the environments they create give us protection and health. We find these people in all different ways – sometimes family, at school, in the community, among our friends. Sometimes its pets. Or people we know through the media, online games or other digital spaces.

Finding 'our tribe' is important because it's about identifying, belonging, believing the same as others, as well as sharing, trusting and helping. We look after each other and feel safer and included.

Having a sense of belonging and connectedness literally increases your health, mental health and wellbeing, as well as learning, education and employment.



"As a rough rule of thumb, if you belong to no groups but you decide to join one, you cut your risk of dying over the next year in half" (Robbert Putnam, Bowling Alone, 1995)

Tips include:

- » Reach out to existing relationships – make a list and call them once a week
- » Call/email/videocall family and friends you have lost contact with
- » Join an online chat group about a hobby
- » Leave a note in your neighbour's letterbox, or a flower, or some origami, or a drawing
- » Walking the dog and smiling at everyone you pass even if you don't stop
- » Arrange to have a cup of tea at the same time on the phone
- » Play an online game together and chat whilst you do
- » Do a meal swap with your neighbour
- » Grow some herbs or produce in a small box and teach the kids how to garden
- » Listen to a radio show at the same time each day

Best, Worst, Funniest

Connect with family/friends. Do the conversation game 'Best, Worst, Funniest' at the dinner table each night. Go around and in turn:

- » **Best.** Ask each person what their best thing from the day was, everyone listens, then go around again
- » **Worst.** Ask each person what their worst thing from the day was, ask how they bounced back and/or acknowledge the challenge, then go around again

» **Funniest.** Ask each person what their funniest thing from the day was and laugh together

Smiling can be infectious. You might make someone's day!

HOW TO HELP OTHERS FEEL CONNECTED AND INCLUDED

It's very common under conditions of fear and stress to focus just on yourself and your group, and even to become suspicious of others who are different to you in some way. The coronavirus does not discriminate, and neither should we. We all have something that is a struggle. And everyone who is doing it really tough is someone's brother, or daughter, parent or childhood friend. We are in this together.

Social exclusion

- » 2.5 million Australians don't have internet access
- » 1 million Australians are expected to lose their jobs with the coronavirus
- » 5 million Australians have experienced food insecurity in the last year
- » 1 in 5 Australians have mental health issues

- » 1 in 3 women have experienced violence in their life
- » More than 1 million Australians experience serious social exclusion
- » 25% of people over 15yo experience some degree of social exclusion
- » 1 in 5 Australians have experienced major discrimination
- » Discrimination leads to poor physical and mental health and even reduced life span

This is a time to pull together, not apart.

Human Connection Challenge:

It's easy to put people in boxes, but we have more in common with others than we realise. Take the Human Connection Challenge!



For each person you come across who has an obvious difference to you, challenge yourself to find at least 3 important things you have in common (for example – family, hobbies, dreams, fears, music, flavours, being human). What's the most unexpected connection you can find?

Stay home, stay safe and stay connected!

MY PLAN FOR KINDNESS & CONNECTION

*Reflecting on your own values can help guide us to where/how/with whom to connect on a deeper level.
It can help us make more meaningful decisions that we are proud of at such a stressful time.*

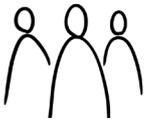
One of my superpowers is...



Last week I felt connected when...



The type of people I like to spend time with care about...



A kind thing I saw happen last week was...



I am the kind of person who...



3 things I will do to help others feel connected and cared for include:

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Being...



... is really important to me

