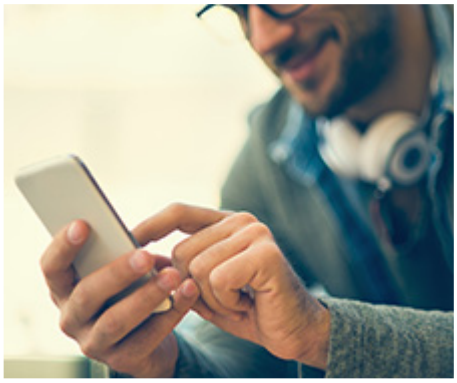
Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Using Technology to Connect With Friends and Family During the COVID-19 Outbreak



If you or a loved one is currently self-isolating or practicing physical distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, staying connected and close with friends and family can be challenging. Here are some tips on connecting digitally with your loved ones.

There are dozens of ways to exchange jokes, stories, news, and life updates. Depending on the technological availability of your loved ones, there are many options to connect, including phone, email, or text messages. Messenger and WhatsApp are popular services for group messages and communicating internationally. If you are able to, consider sending handwritten letters, cards, photos, or notes from time to time, too.

Consider having video chats. Have face-to-face chats in real time on your phone or computer using **Skype**, **Google Hangouts**, **FaceTime**, or another platform.
Record special events, updates, and stories. Take digital photos or videos you can share with family and friends via text, email, or by sharing your online albums on **Google Photos**, **Flickr**, or **Snapfish**.

If a friend or relative doesn't use email or text messages, help the person get started. If they show an interest in learning how to use email, you might suggest a free online Email Basics tutorial at **GCFGlobal**.

Get an inexpensive long-distance phone plan if you don't already have one. You might also look into talking with a few close friends or relatives over the phone using a free conference-line service such as **FreeConferenceCall.com**.

Remember important dates and life events. Show that you are thinking about your loved ones even though you're unable to physically be around them. Send an "I'm thinking of you" message. Send birthday, anniversary, and sympathy cards. Send a note when a friend's child graduates or gets married or when there is a birth or an adoption in the family. It only takes a minute to send an **e-card**.

Share big news first with the people you love most. Tell your closest family and friends about big news, such as a new job, a birth, or an engagement, before you post it on social media for everyone to see at once. Telling them first is a way of showing that they are special to you.

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