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Center for Work & Family
CARROLL SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

Enhancing Social Interactions

April 2020

This information brief is intended to assist employees, managers and organizations as they work to stay connected during the unprecedented challenges presented by the Coronavirus pandemic.

[8 Ways to Manage Your Team While Social Distancing \(HBR\)](#)

Psychological safety is paramount even under conditions of quarantine. The following are suggestions to create and sustain this condition.

- **Reset your expectations** for how work gets done, let go of when and how tasks are accomplished, and allow team members to complete their responsibilities on their own terms.
- **Stay in regular touch**, as shorter communication cycle times are more effective in building and sustaining morale and engagement. Using instant messaging and video conferencing can aid a team in staying in contact.
- **Support continued learning**, but keep it short by taking advantage of microlearning.
- **Assign buddies and peer coaches** to add a layer of mutual support so as not to exhaust the manager's capacity. This shared leadership model guards against emotional isolation.
- **Interpret tone and voice as proxies for face-to-face feedback** to identify early if a team member needs some additional support.
- **Model optimism and drain the team of fear**. Fear freezes initiative, ties up creativity, and yields compliance instead of commitment. Use humor as a relief valve.
- **Update even if there's no update**, because the more you communicate and share, the less anxiety will develop. It is essential to maintain transparency in times of crisis.
- **Continually gauge stress and engagement levels** on a zero-to-10 scale.

[Coronavirus And Your Career: How To Effectively Network During A Quarantine](#)

The good news is that due to modern technology, meeting in-person isn't required to develop new relationships or deepen existing ones. So, although we're all practicing some form of social distancing for the moment, here's how to maintain and grow your network while quarantined:

- **Make the effort**. Be proactive in finding new ways to network daily such as emails, social media, webinars, online group chats or whichever technology feels most comfortable to you. This way you'll stay top of mind and be exposed to new information more readily.

- **Think long-term** and connect with customers, share updates, and offer free tools if you are able.
- **Embrace the sense of community.** If you're in a position to help others now, do it. Reach out, contribute, support, connect, or encourage. If you're in a position where you could use help, don't isolate. Let people know specifically what you need.
- **Be the glue person.** Reach across departments and make yourself stand out.
- **Join an online forum.**
- **Go back in time** and reconnect with older members of your network.
- **Consider the context** and understand that not everyone can reply in a timely manner during this crisis.

[The Art of Socializing During a Quarantine](#)

- **Keep dining and drinking 'together'.** While scheduling something that usually originates spontaneously, like lunch with your colleagues, can feel a little contrived, sharing meals can be an opportunity for connection. Therefore, it is worthwhile to formalize that interaction.
- **Reach out to friends near and far.** It is now just as easy to connect with someone thousands of miles away as it is to connect with someone just a mile up the road.
- **Use a variety of media.** Frequent, lightweight contact such as quick text messages can be just as meaningful as long, synchronous conversations over video chat.
- **Support others (or just let them know you're available).** Research indicates that offering support can be beneficial to the offerrer in addition to the offeree.
- **Connect with the people in your own home.** Try to think of ways you can enjoy this time together rather than feeling distressed about it.
- **Fight monotony.**

[40 Ways to Maintain Social Ties During the Coronavirus Quarantine](#)

This article lists 40 suggestions for staying connected, including "taking weekly meetups into the virtual world", "meeting up for an almost-in-person meal", "hosting a virtual game night" and "getting outdoors".

[Social distancing can make you lonely. Here's how to stay connected when you're in lockdown](#)

This article provides tips to remain connected when you're practising social distancing or in quarantine:

- Think about how you can interact with others without putting your health (or theirs) at risk. Can you speak to your neighbours from over a fence or across balconies?
- If you have access to it, use technology to stay in touch. If you have a smartphone, use the video capabilities (seeing someone's facial expressions can help increase connection).
- Check in with your friends, family, and neighbours regularly. Wherever you can, assist people in your life who may be more vulnerable (for example, those with no access to the internet or who cannot easily use the internet to shop online)

- Spend the time connecting with the people you are living with. If you are in a lockdown situation, use this time to improve your existing relationships
- Manage your stress levels. Exercise, meditate, and keep to a daily routine as much as you can
- It's not just family and friends who require support, but others in your community. Showing kindness to others not only helps them but can also increase your sense of purpose and value, improving your own well-being.

[Working Remotely During COVID-19: Your Mental Health and Well-being](#)

- **Maintaining health and wellness while working remotely**
 - Engage your support network (family, friends, etc.) through regular check-ins, and let them know if you need extra support.
- **What managers and HR professionals can do to support employees**
 - Show empathy and be available. Understand that employees are likely overwhelmed and anxious, and make yourself available to answer questions and take about fears.
 - Stay connected with communication and meeting tools to check in and allow teams to connect face-to-face.
 - Recognize the impact of isolation and loneliness. Check in routinely with your team not just about work, but to see how they're doing. Be aware of changes in employees' personality or work that may indicate they're struggling.
 - Encourage online training and new learning opportunities that may allow employees to sharpen their skills and distract from other issues.
 - Check in with your EAP and health plan to confirm their availability and coordinate support for your employees. Remind staff that the EAP is there if they need support, and learn what support health plans are offering to plan members and pass that information onto employees.

Additional Resources

[Company Survival Guide to Care for Staff during the Coronavirus](#) (Forbes 4/1/20)

[US Chamber of Commerce Coronavirus Response Toolkit](#)

[CDC Guidance Documents - Interim Guidance for Business and Employers](#)

[CDC Communication Resources](#)

[A List of Essential Workers that We Should Thank and Support during the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

Relevant CWF Resources

[Emergency Leave during COVID-19 \(March 2020\)](#)

[Remote Work and COVID-19 \(March 2020\)](#)

[COVID-19 Emergency Leave \(March 2020\)](#)

[Flexible/Remote Work Communications during COVID-19 \(March 2020\)](#)