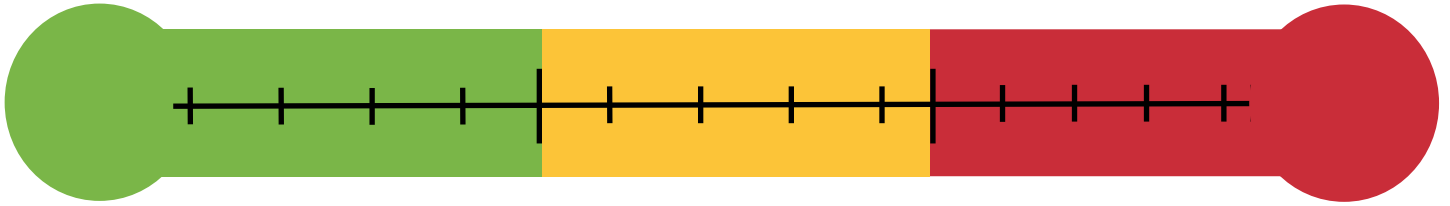


Weekly Check-In



Think back to the **Well-Being Thermometer**. Are you in the **Green zone**, **Yellow zone**, or **Red zone**? What can you do to stay in the green zone or move towards the green zone?

Think back to last week's homework activity:

What went well?

What was challenging? What have you learned *about yourself* that will help you to manage these challenges in the future?

Session 8

Staying Connected With Others



This week, we will talk about social interactions more broadly and explore some of the small and subtle ways that we can reap the benefits of our daily interactions with others, even while keeping a

safe physical distance. Remember that goal is to keep *physically* not socially distant from one another.

Why staying socially connected is important during COVID-19?

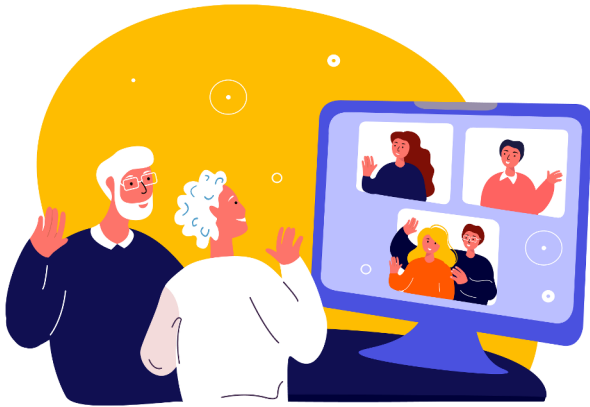
Social connection is one of the most important factors for well-being. Socializing is often rated one of the happiest and most enjoyable activities in our daily lives. Because physical distancing has likely made it more difficult to interact with others as often as we used to, we need to be more intentional about finding new, creative ways to interact with others. We also need to make sure that we get the most of the interactions that we do have!

connection

How To Stay Connected During COVID-19

There are likely many less opportunities to interact with others as there used to be prior to COVID-19. As a result, we will need to be more creative and intentional about how we maintain connection with others.

We can use technology to stay connected!



- Facetime
- Zoom
- Facebook video
- Skype
- Google duo

Here are some other ways to enjoy your favourite social activities

Before COVID-19	Book club; going to the movies; concerts and festivals with friends; dinner and happy hour or cooking with family and friends; walks and runs with friends; board games; casual interactions with co-workers.
During COVID-19	Online book club; stream TV and movies with friend; virtual concerts; create music playlist and share with friends; organize a creative group online; dinner and happy hour or cooking with friends and family over zoom; Facetime and call friends on walks; go on physically distanced walks; virtual board games (e.g., using apps); send coworkers and friends videos and pictures of your day.
As the restrictions of COVID-19 are lifted	Organizing small gatherings with close friends; physically distanced picnic in provincial parks; physically distanced backyard visit; camping with close friends; physically distanced visit to a local business.

How To Stay Connected During COVID-19

Take a moment to list your favourite social activities, and brainstorm ways that you can still engage in these activity during the pandemic and as public health restrictions are gradually lift.

Given the well-being benefits from maintaining a regular connection with others, can you think of ways to make more social the activities that you typically enjoy doing alone?

Before COVID-19	
During COVID-19	
As the restrictions of COVID-19 are lifted	

Finding Support In Social Connections



Research shows that feeling supported by others is associated with a host of beneficial well-being outcomes, including an increase in positive feelings and life satisfaction.

Social support may enhance well-being by increasing positive emotions, one's sense of self-worth, and predictability in life. Social support may also help to buffer stress by increasing self-esteem, personal empowerment, self-control, and problem solving skills.



Luckily, many of the benefits of in-person social support on our well-being seem to hold true for online social support.

Types of Social Support

There are four main types of social support

Emotional Support

Positive psychological support. *For example, talking to a friend when feeling anxious about contracting the virus or about loved ones contracting the virus.*

Encouragement

The words from others that keep you going. *For example, your partner tells you they are impressed by your efforts to keep working during challenging times.*

Applied Support

Any type of practical assistance. *For example, a family member lends you their tablet to video call with friends and loved ones.*

Problem solving

When others help you find ways to solve challenging moments. *For example, a friend helps you brainstorm ways to get physical activity during COVID-19.*

What types of social support are you receiving, and from whom?

Are there any types of support that you would like more of?

Building Social Supports

let's
HELP
each
OTHER



Get what you need from your social supports

Ask for it

Don't assume that people in your life know what you need. Ask them for support. Ask more than once if you need to. Be willing to accept "no" for an answer. Be hopeful that if you ask again, they may say "yes."

Be specific

Don't make broad requests. Know what you want or need, then ask for it specifically. For example, ask for help with the dishes, instead of help with housework more generally.

Be flexible

Talk about other options if what you ask for isn't accepted. For example, if your partner cannot do the dishes every night, ask if you can alternate days.

The Power of Social Interactions

STRONGER
Together
BUT 6 FEET APART!

Even brief friendly interactions with people we barely know can make us feel happier and more socially connected.

Research shows that...

- People report feeling more socially connected when a passerby made brief eye contact instead of looking past them.
- Students experienced greater happiness and feelings of belonging when they interacted with classmates more than usual. This involved simple things like making eye contact, smiling, and engaging in brief conversation - *asking "how is your day going?"* These are all things that we can do while maintaining safe physical distance!

Reflect on how it feels to have someone stops to say, "hi," ask about your day or how you are doing. How do these moments affect your relationship with others?

The Power of Social Interactions

The opposite of social support (or a lack of social interaction or exclusion) can negatively impact memory, logical reasoning, and self-control of behaviours. A lack of social interaction and support can also increase aggressive behaviour. Fortunately, we do not have to give up social interactions while physical distancing!



Brainstorm some activities that might foster **new** social connections with others, while still keeping a safe distance. Remember, our goal is to physically distance **not** socially distance.

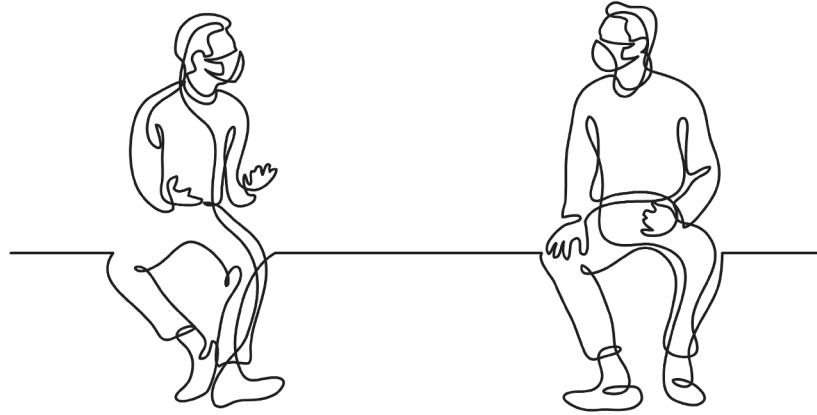
E.g., Try an organized class (e.g., exercise, yoga) on Zoom

E.g., Join an Instagram-live group

E.g., Join a Facebook group for your favourite hobby or interest

Connecting With Strangers

Even brief friendly interactions with strangers can boost our overall well-being and sense of connection with others.



Write about a time when you were friendly to someone such as a neighbour, a colleague, the mail carrier, or the coffee barista.

How did this person make you feel? How do you think this interaction made that person feel?

How would each of you felt if there had been no interaction?

Connecting With Strangers

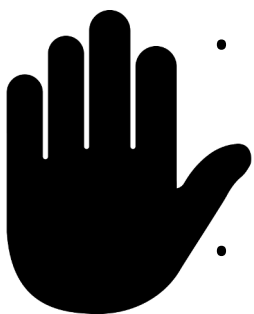
Think of social interactions as potential boosters for our well-being. Every interaction with a stranger where we do not engage with them is a missed opportunity for a social boost in our well-being.

Although the social restrictions of COVID-19 have limited the social opportunities for boosting our well-being, consider the following situations where there is still potential for social interaction:

- Filling up at the gas station
- Buying groceries
- Passing people on walks
- Home deliveries
- Seeing people in cars stopped at a red light

Where else is there potential for interaction with others in your current environment?

A Word of Caution



- Be mindful that not everyone may be up for it – people may not reciprocate or they may respond negatively to your interaction. That's OK.
- Talking to strangers may not always be advisable. If you ever feel unsafe talking to a stranger, then don't!

Putting It Into Practice

This week, your challenge will be to initiate **creative** social interactions with others. Make a plan to implement 3-5 creative social interactions for this week:



SMALL Goal Checklist

Is your goal....

- Self-selected
- Measurable
- Action-oriented
- Linked to your lifestyle
- Time Limited

Social Interaction #1

What will I do: _____

Where will I do it: _____

When will I do it: _____

How will I do it: _____

Who will help me with it: _____

Putting It Into Practice

Social Interaction #2

What will I do: _____

Where will I do it: _____

When will I do it: _____

How will I do it: _____

Who will help me with it: _____

Social Interaction #3

What will I do: _____

Where will I do it: _____

When will I do it: _____

How will I do it: _____

Who will help me with it: _____



Putting It Into Practice

Social Interaction #4

What will I do: _____

Where will I do it: _____

When will I do it: _____

How will I do it: _____

Who will help me with it: _____

Social Interaction #5

What will I do: _____

Where will I do it: _____

When will I do it: _____

How will I do it: _____

Who will help me with it: _____