



Building connections

Positive social connections

Positive social connections are essential for our overall wellbeing and can help us to cope during difficult times.

The social networks that we create through relationships, social activities, lived experiences, work and spiritual / cultural groups allow us to feel a sense of connectedness and community.

These positive relationships can lower levels of anxiety and depression, while raising self-esteem and confidence.

While there may be times in our lives when we may not feel like staying connected, isolation can make it harder to cope during difficult times and make it tougher to recover.

Whether it's spending time with loved ones, chatting to a friend, joining a sports team or group of like-minded people, going to a place of worship or waving to your neighbour, staying emotionally and socially connected can have a positive effect on your mental health and overall wellbeing.



How to connect

Connecting with those you live with

- *Board games*
- *Gardening*
- *Creative Craft*
- *Music*

Phone a friend

Make a phone call to a friend or family member that you haven't spoken to for a while, or better yet, try videocalls using FaceTime, Skype, Zoom or apps like House Party or Google Hangouts

Online forums

Online forums are a great way to stay connected digitally. You may choose to find a forum that relates to a hobby or there are also some great forums that are designed to support mental health and well being such as Beyond Blue, Counselling Online, headspace and SANE.

Social media

While social media can be a great way to stay connected, extensive exposure to negative information can be harmful to our mental health. If your social media feed puts you in a negative mindset, try using alternate ways to stay connected. You can also complete a social media "cleanse" where you only follow accounts that make you feel good.

Adopt a pet

Although human connection is important, animals can also be great companions especially if you live on your own.



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How to connect continued

Online clubs & groups

Find a group of like-minded people to engage with in a mutual hobby with. This could be done face to face if available but don't forget a lot of groups are now available online:

- *Book Clubs*
- *Fitness Clubs*
- *Cultural groups*
- *Cooking groups*
- *Music groups*
- *Online gaming community*

Look after yourself

In tough times we need to remember to look after ourselves.

Taking care of yourself is important, as it will increase your capacity to deal with stress and adversity.

Things that may help

- *Try to have some time out*
- *Do things you enjoy*
- *Keep in touch with family, friends and neighbours*
- *Reflect on the good stuff*
- *Eat well, sleep well and only use alcohol in moderation*
- *Get support*



Getting Support

Check out the **Rural Aid Mental Health & Wellbeing** website for tips on how to look after your mental health. If you've tried some of these strategies for some time without improving despite your efforts, it's time to reach out to a trusted friend, family member, elder, counsellor or health service.

You can get in contact with **Rural Aid's Mental Health & Wellbeing** team by calling **1300 327 624** or emailing mhwb@ruralaid.org.au

If you ever feel unable to cope because of overwhelming or intense emotions, or if you have any thoughts of harming yourself, then ask for help immediately or call **000** or speak to someone at **Lifeline (13 11 14)**.