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## DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS

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### Wellness Corner

#### Physical Distancing, Not Social Distancing

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“No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.”  
—John Donne

Humans exist within a society. We thrive through relationships. Social interaction and connectedness boost mood, decrease depression, and increase resilience to stress. It goes without saying that the current pandemic has dramatically altered how we connect with others, while the stress and anxiety it causes make these relationships even more vital. What can we do while we wait for hugging and hand-shakes to be safe again?

#### Do:

Be really intentional about interacting with people. A recent [Lancet review](#) reported that activation of social networks is essential in preserving psychological health during quarantine and has an impact on decreasing distress afterward. In other words, check on your neighbors. Call your mom. FaceTime or Zoom with a group of old classmates. Join a virtual book club, a faith-based small group, or an interactive seminar. Schedule it, and then prioritize it. Interested in joining a group of faculty? [Follow this link](#).

Smile. Every time you think of it. Every time you see another human. Or even your pet. Or your neighbor's pet. Called "[facial feedback](#)," making the smiling shape with your face actually causes you to feel happy. Seeing someone smile increases positive emotions in others as well, and smiles are "contagious." The Duchenne Smile (yes; same Duchenne) involves contraction of both the zygomatic major muscle and the orbicularis oculi muscle, causing the smile to involve the mouth and the eyes. So, people can see that you're smiling, even when you wear a mask. Go ahead—show off those crow's feet! People can hear the smile in your voice when you speak, and hearing a smile has also been shown to [cause the listener to smile](#).

Show your face. Turn your video on when you video conference. A [study](#) of female college students showed that social connection via video chat was second to face-to-face interaction and better than audio-only or text communication. It just feels good to see the faces of people you can't see in real life.

Go for a walk. Remind yourself of the community in which you live. The benefits of being outdoors for wellbeing are well-established. Spending time in nature; smelling spring flowers, grass, and trees, and sunlight boost mood and [improve energy](#). While you're out, say "hello" to your neighbors. From a safe distance, stop and talk with them. Take this opportunity to get to know someone you may not have known before.

#### Don't:

Do not forget that this is temporary. Though it is unclear when, we will be able to safely gather together and greet one another again. We are part of the way up this mountain, and although we may not see one another in person, you are not alone on this trek. We will get there. And—Oh, BOY!—are we going to have a party!