

Many of us struggle with feelings of loneliness and don't always know how to reach out for what we need. When loneliness surges, use that as a cue to connect with others who may be feeling it too. Challenge yourself to reach out daily. Making the first move is a courageous way to bring compassion to others and yourself.

- › **Lean into your connection style.** Ask for or initiate what you need – a phone call, video chat, or whatever works best for you. If you'd rather be doing an activity together, think about suggesting a virtual viewing party of a favorite show or movie. Playing video games or board games with friends could be another option.
- › **Share a meal.** If eating out with friends has been a go-to way to connect, plan an online get-together instead. Support your favorite restaurant, if they offer pick up or delivery, and sit down for some virtual conversation. Or you might try a virtual 'bake off' or swapping ideas for a head-to-head taste test of favorite recipes.
- › **Schedule it.** Don't leave it to chance. Plan a regular phone call or virtual meet-up with a friend. Having a weekly, virtual 'game night' with relatives, or a lunch-time check-in with coworkers weaves connection into your day and gives you something to look forward to.

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- › **Learn a new skill online.** Exploring a new skill or hobby can be a distraction, but also a potential source of social connections. For example, working with a tutor to brush up on a second language or joining virtual version of a club, such as Toastmasters, to build comfort with public speaking.
- › **Mix up your media diet.** When the novelty of binging your favorite TV shows wears off, consider looking into other forms of media such as YouTube channels, e-sports, or blogs that focus on topics that intrigue you. As always, use your judgment on the internet, but you might just discover a new interest, or live vicariously through a travel diary recorded halfway around the world. Spending time exploring your interests online can connect you with new communities you didn't know existed.
- › **Don't give up on meeting new people.** Check local dating services, hobby shops, community centers, or other 'meetup' groups to see if they are hosting virtual event you pass. You might be the only person who spoke to them that day. A quick chat on the walking path or a friendly wave when you're out getting the mail

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