



# FAMILIES TACKLING TOUGH TIMES TOGETHER



FAMILY

## We Care About Each Other! Connectedness

Even when family members are in the same space together on a daily basis, it can still feel hard to connect with each other. It can also be difficult to connect with family members and friends who don't live with us when we can't visit them or while socially distancing. Building and keeping positive connections with family and friends can be harder when we feel stressed and anxious.

Social connectedness is a very important protective factor for adults, children and families. It helps reduce stress, build relationships, improve our skills to get through, and can improve our physical and mental health. We need to feel loved, wanted, understood, and to receive positive attention from others. The good news is that the people we reach out to are also often eager for support and connection as well.

### Internal Actions

Keeping supportive relationships and strong connections with others in your life during uncertain times can help you build resiliency. Here are some things you can do to build connections:

- **Check in with each family member individually.** Take a moment to ask your family member how their day has been. Ask how they are feeling or invite them to show you a picture or image that tells how they are feeling. It's easy to get distracted with life, but taking time to listen and be in the moment takes only a few minutes and will go a long way in building and keeping strong connections.
- **Show compassion and kindness.** Encouraging family members to share their negative emotions or worries without them being ignored or "made less of" can help reduce anxiety. If your family member sees your true concern and compassion for their well-being, they may worry less.

### External Actions

**Have a front porch or neighborhood yard sitting night.** Consider organizing an event where friends or neighbors gather on porches, in the yard, in a park, or in a community space while social distancing. Encourage social distanced conversations to build a sense of connectedness and to help build relationships. Families, neighbors, and friends may enjoy making signs to cheer each other while safely talking with those they have not seen in a while. Refer to the CDC's guidelines on [daily activities and going out](#) for more information on how to be safe while out in your community.

For more information about porch sitting and its health and wellness benefits, you may wish to read:

- [Recovering the Lost Art of Porch Sitting](#)
- [Sitting on a Porch Can Be Good for Your Health](#)

Some of the material on this page was adapted from:

- [Influences of social connectedness on behaviour in young children: A longitudinal investigation using GUiNZ data research report](#)
- [Hugging – 7 Backed-by-Science Benefits](#)
- [Social Connections: Protective & Promotive Factors](#)



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College of Health and Human Sciences

## Welcome to Families Tackling Tough Times Together!

We hope you find the enclosed ideas and suggestions helpful as you care for your family during the pandemic. We know the pandemic is a very big challenge. How families cope can affect both parents and children for a long time.

We are scientists, educators, and students from Purdue University, and we are here to help! For nine weeks this fall, we will provide weekly collections of ideas for families to use to build on their strengths.

These tools are free, flexible, and informed by science. They are designed for families of all types, with tailored suggestions for children, youth, young adults and older adults, and suitable for both civilian and military families. We hope that your family will try one activity each week!

### Would you like to earn financial rewards?

We especially welcome families living in the continental US who are interested in trying out project materials and telling us about their experiences. These families can earn financial rewards by sharing about one hour of their time over the next two months. Sign up now at the link below!

[https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3vK1BJq2EiUksAJ](https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3vK1BJq2EiUksAJ)

For more information

- Join the Families Together Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HHSFamiliesTogether/>
- Visit the project website: <https://www.hhs.purdue.edu/families-together/>