

Tips for positive and healthy family relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic



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CITY COUNCIL

Social isolation and social distancing mean that we are spending more time at home with our families. Being in a confined environment during this unprecedented and stressful time can put a strain on family relationships.

Whether you're with a partner, caring for children, living with teenagers, working from home, or looking after elderly parents, there are several strategies that can help keep your family relationships healthy and positive while under the same roof.

Being aware of the potential challenges and finding ways to maintain healthy bonds as well as look after our physical and mental health, will help keep family relationships strong and connected.

This fact sheet provides you with some tips to help maintain positive and resilient family relationships while you are in social isolation.

Communication, communication, communication

Right now, more than ever, it is important to have conversations around communication and what that means for your family. Talk about how family members can work together to encourage positive and respectful communication at home and set some rules and boundaries.

Tips on positive communication:

- Talk things through, be honest and open with each other about how you feel.
- Try to manage your emotions and stay calm when tensions arise.
- Listen with your full attention.
- Be open and willing to compromise.
- Use praise and show appreciation of each other.
- Be aware of non-verbal messages and body language.
- Try to be patient.
- Laugh together, whenever you can.

Quality family time

Embrace this time as an opportunity to spend quality family time together. Pulling together during tough times can help build stronger bonds and resilience. Create time during each day for family time to happen.

Tips on quality family time:

- Share some time each day talking. Have one-on-one chats with each member of your family to strengthen individual relationships.
- Put regular time aside each day to play together and do fun things.
- Continue with family 'traditions' or rituals or create new ones eg. pancakes on Sundays.
- Find something to celebrate each day together such as a family meal.
- Be conscious of little ways you can support and do things for each other.
- Be affectionate, kind and respectful in your interactions.
- Be hopeful and optimistic, you will get through this by working together.

Activities to do as a family

There are many things that you can do together as a family. Do things that you have done before and enjoyed together but also try some new things that you have never done before.

Here are some ideas you can share family time together:

- Go for a walk and enjoy the sunshine or just go outside for fresh air regularly.
- Start a veggie patch or a gardening project.
- Do physical activity or exercise together — try Council's *GEL Anywhere* program <https://www.geleisure.com.au/group-fitness/gel-anywhere> or create your own exercise routine.
- Listen to music, dance or sing together.
- Watch movies, television or read a book together.
- Do an art and craft project together — make greeting cards; jewellery, candles.
- Play board games, do jigsaw puzzles or break out the Lego.
- Do a small woodwork or construction project.
- Play outdoor games — basketball, badminton, backyard tennis, soccer or cricket.
- Do a crossword puzzle or a word search together.
- Cook, bake and pretend you are in a *MasterChef* competition.
- Stay connected to your family and friends by phone or video chat — book in video visits to grandparents, cousins or family friends.
- Think of and do acts of kindness for your neighbours or local community.

Reaching out to others:

If the strain on family relationships becomes unhealthy or creates an environment that is unsafe, reach out for support. There are many organisations that can provide professional support services to assist you and your family. Contact them if you need, they are there to help.

Important contacts	Useful websites
Relationships Australia 1300 364 277 1800RESPECT 1800 737 732 Lifeline 13 11 14 or online chat Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636 or online chat Parentline 1300 301 300 Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 Headspace 1800 650 890 Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre 1800 015 188 (24 hours) MensLine Australia 1300 78 99 78	https://www.relationshipsvictoria.com.au/ https://www.1800respect.org.au/ https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/ https://www.beyondblue.org.au/home https://raisingchildren.net.au/ https://www.betterplaceaustralia.com.au/