

# Social connections



The festive period can be an exciting time with many things to look forward to as the year comes to a close. For some, it will be a time to celebrate, reflect, relax and rejuvenate. However, it may also be a stressful and lonely time for some. As many as one in three Australians say they feel lonely during the holidays and most find at least one element of Christmas stressful be it financial burdens, work, finding the perfect gift, hosting Christmas lunch or being away from family and friends.

## Staying connected

Being connected to our loved ones and community is important for both our mental and physical wellbeing and can prevent or reduce anxiety and depression. Loneliness can impact our chemical stress levels, sleep and blood pressure which in turn can all lead to other health concerns, as well as having a detrimental effect on our mental health and wellbeing.

The health benefits of social connection can be wide reaching. Among the benefits are that meaningful relationships can improve our self-esteem and immune system function.




## Ways to seek social connections

Staying connected throughout the year is beneficial to our ongoing mental health and wellbeing. During the festive season and into the new year is often considered an important time to reunite with loved ones, especially if you don't live near one another. Here are some ways you can seek extra social connection these holidays:

- 1 Visit your family or close connections or invite them to visit you (or give them a call if you can't be with them physically).
- 2 Have a celebration within your friendship group – invite your mates over to watch a festive film and have dinner, go out for a meal or find a fun activity in your local area.
- 3 Is your work having an end of year event? If so, use this as an opportunity to get to know your co-workers in a more social setting.

## Staying connected from a distance

Staying connected with our friends, family and loved ones has been harder than usual over the last few years, with most of us spending large periods of time in lockdown. While these time were difficult, they taught us that you can still connect with people even if you can't be with them physically. There's lots of ways to feel connected:

	<p>Video call your loved ones so you can still see them – plan to have dinner together, open presents together, or watch a movie together! All of these activities – and many more – can be done virtually</p>
	<p>Keep updated with pictures and videos – create a shared photo album that your friends and family can access and update it regularly. You may also want to use smart photo frames to send your photos to so your loved ones can enjoy seeing your updates.</p>
	<p>Take up the lost art of letter writing! There's something so special about receiving something in the post that isn't a bill or junk mail. Send a card or letter to someone you care about – you'll feel more connected to them and they will love receiving something heartfelt in the post (and might return the favour!).</p>