

Reconnecting with Our Communities as We Move Forward Together



The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on our communities. Many communities have felt less connected. Families can no longer meet for birthdays. Friends can't go out to dinner. Many co-workers no longer see each other at work every day. And faith communities have had to attend services online. On the other hand, there are ways the pandemic has shown the strength of our communities. People are volunteering to grocery shop for elderly neighbors. And many are reconnecting with old friends who live far away via video calls.

As we start to have gatherings such as holidays, birthday parties, weddings and baby showers in person, how can we stay safe?

If you are hosting a gathering:

- Check local guidelines. What are the most up-to-date recommendations on social distancing? Mask use? Size of gathering?
- Consider your community's comfort levels. How do you and your loved ones feel about an in-person gathering? What rules would make them more comfortable?
- Make expectations clear. Spread the word beforehand about the plan for your gathering. Tell attendees what's expected for distancing, mask use, being indoors/outdoors, etc.
- Acknowledge the transition. People are likely to feel awkward, anxious or even panicked right now. By calling this out, you can make your loved ones feel more comfortable about sharing their feelings.
- To be inclusive, continue to provide multiple ways to connect. People will feel comfortable going back into physical spaces at different times. High-risk individuals in particular may need to wait longer. Consider a gathering that can be attended both in person and online. Tailor your activities to include those joining virtually.

If you are attending a gathering:

- Decide the best way for you to participate. Check local guidelines on sizes of gatherings, social distancing and mask use. Consider your own comfort level before choosing to attend in person. If you feel the host or guests may not follow guidelines or think you will be uncomfortable, consider joining virtually or not attending.
- If you attend in person, ask your host about their expectations for the gathering. And make sure you follow them. Bring your mask and hand sanitizer.
- If you attend virtually, eliminate distractions. Make sure you can focus on participating. Be patient, as many are figuring out how to use video calls. And consider how you might make yourself feel like you're there. That might mean putting up décor that matches the event or offering to lead an activity.
- If you decide not to attend, let your host know as early as possible. Send a gift if appropriate.

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