



## Managing family dynamics

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our lives in many ways. Schools have moved to virtual, people are working from home and we are all practicing physical distancing. Our day-to-day routines have been altered, if not changed all together. In some cases, this means seeing the people in your household more than you are accustomed to, or having people, such as a university aged child or an elderly parent, move in with you that didn't live with you before the pandemic, and you are seeing less of other family members and friends.

### Take advantage of found time

While old routines and schedules may be disrupted, it's an opportunity to build new norms and create new routines and experiences. Depending on who is now living at home may require a new set of priorities and rules. Holding an all-family meeting can help set ground rules and ensure everyone understands what is expected of them during this time – will there be designated family time? How will you indicate you need some un-interrupted time to yourself?

If your home has not changed dramatically it's still good to reset and reevaluate, everyone's routines will need to be reconsidered.

Now is also your chance to spend more quality time with family. With most people needing to stay primarily in their homes, they are finding free time where they once commuted to work, took kids to extra-curricular activities, or ran errands.

That time could be replaced with going for a walk or discovering a new hobby as a family, such as gardening, learning a new board game, or watching favourite movies together. Take the hour that was used to shuttle your daughter and her friends to soccer practice and use it for some one-on-one time and catch up on

things you haven't spoken about in a while, or check in to see how they're doing during this time.

## Strengthen bonds

We often wish we had more time with loved ones. While there is a lot to worry about during this pandemic, take this rare opportunity to enjoy the new-found time you have with each other. Pay attention to the things that matter to each other. Talk to each other, and really listen.

It is also important that you find time for yourself. Take time to recharge your batteries, so you can appreciate the time you spend with your family.

## It won't always be easy

Changes and challenges can strain relationships. As well, spending a lot of time with people in close quarters can be stressful and may be difficult at times — it's to be expected. Issues and challenges that have been worked on in the past may reemerge. Be mindful about existing strains on relationships and take the time to think about ways to approach things differently. Now might also be a good time to consult a professional if old strains seem bigger and more unsolvable now. Having support may help you build new strategies to cope with demands of this new time.

We are in uncertain and challenging times. Not every day will be the same and not every day will be easy. Remind yourself that everyone will react differently to our new situation, but you can take advantage of the time you have and enjoy some additional quality time with the people closest to you.

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