

It's Time To Reconnect.



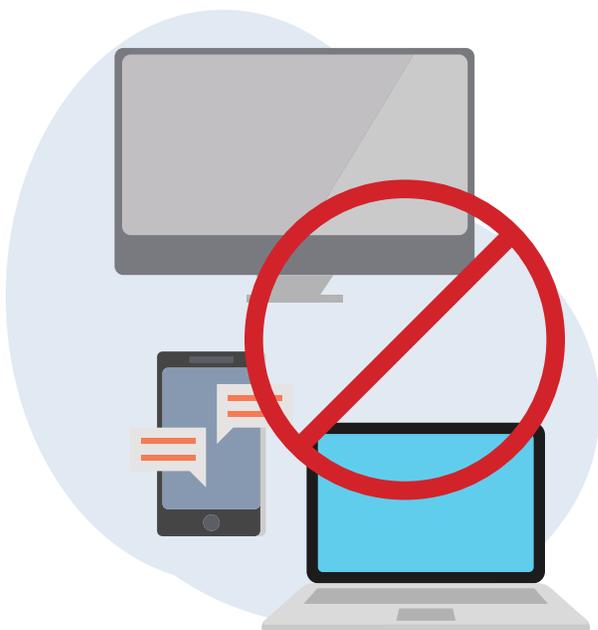
Due to the ever shifting, **anxiety-provoking time** we have all been experiencing, many of us **isolated** from others and spent more **time on screens** than we expected. So, it's not surprising that we may be a little rusty when it comes to connecting with people. We may find ourselves taking longer than usual to pick up on a loved one's **social cues** indicating that they're going through a tough time or maybe we forget to provide a supportive smile because we wore a mask for so long.

Fortunately, it's not too late to take steps to change this and reconnect!



One of the first steps towards reconnecting can be taking breaks from our screens. Changing this habit may be difficult at first but, if we **push through the discomfort**, we're likely to realize we feel better connecting with others than we did spending time on social media or watching TV. How you choose to structure this will vary depending on your family routines, but you could start by implementing a **"media blackout"** for your household. The blackout is a designated time when all screens go off for the whole family, providing a space for quality time with limited interruptions.

This is a great opportunity to **talk to one another** in a way that facilitates deeper conversations and brings you **closer as a family**, especially during a time characterized by an incredible amount of change.



Below are some tips to help guide you in these conversations.

USE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS.

Don't just ask, **"Do you like that you're back in school now?"** or **"Did you have a good day today?"** It can be challenging to continue a conversation after a one-word response. Instead, encourage them to share more details by asking, **"What is it like being back at school?"** or **"Describe your afternoon for me."**



DEVELOP SHARED LANGUAGE.

Adjusting to changes can be **tough on everyone**, and it can be even **harder to talk about** them. It's important to have these conversations, regardless of whether the changes are good or bad. Try incorporating this into your family time by going around the room and sharing your low and high of the day. Agreeing on what you will call your lows and highs helps **normalize the practice of talking** about negative experiences while also being intentional about expressing, and thus appreciating, the positive ones. Consider using words like, Valleys/Mountains, Thorns/Roses, or Trolls/Knights (**have fun with it!**).



BE PROACTIVE.

You don't need to wait until your family is in the midst of a big change before you start talking about it. Having meaningful and **focused conversations** about how everyone is feeling about potential change can help ease people's minds. Knowing that there is a **plan of action** if change were to happen can also help alleviate stress of the unknown.



MAKE A PLAN.

Decide on how you will **communicate change** with your family. If possible, make one of your check-in's a little longer one day to provide some time to talk about the coming week. Additionally, you can plan to always call a family meeting to **discuss big changes** that impact the family. This increases the likelihood that everyone gets the chance to feel heard.



Taking the time to **reconnect** by **putting down screens**, talking about what's going on in our lives, and developing plans not only **strengthens our relationships**, but it can also support our ability to adapt to change. As you engage in these conversations, remember that we may not know what someone is going through and everyone responds differently to change. So, a little more grace and a lot more **compassion can go a long way**.

For free resources, visit apafdn.org or email apafoundation@psych.org for more information.