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How to Stay Connected with a Loved One in Long-Term Care



How do you stay close when you can't hug? How do you reassure your family member or friend that you're thinking about them when they can't see you?

Whether you're a long-distance caregiver or you're temporarily unable to visit due to COVID-19 restrictions, you may be searching for creative ways to keep emotional bonds strong despite the distance.

Strategies for Staying Connected

Sending cards and letters is a reassuring reminder that you care. Prepare a stack of stamped, addressed envelopes or postcards. That makes it easy to write a quick note and send it to your loved one. You also can provide pre-addressed envelopes and stationery for them to respond.

Share photos that bring back good memories. A small album of printed photos, or a slideshow displayed in a digital frame, is a thoughtful gift.

Use technology to make talking easier. Do you worry because your loved one rarely picks up the phone when you call? Mobile phones can be challenging for some older people to master. Consider trying a different device, such as the [Portal from Facebook](#), which has Alexa-enabled video calling and simple privacy settings.

Ask staff for assistance in staying connected. Many nursing homes, assisted living communities and other long-term care facilities offer family members the chance to connect via video call. Some also offer porch visits, window visits and other socially distanced opportunities to meet and be together.

Build a relationship with staff. The staff of a long-term care facility are the ones who interact with your loved one every day. Take the time to get to know them and show them how much you appreciate all they do each day.

Coordinate calls with other family members. If you're the only person who's responsible for a loved one's emotional health, at times you may feel stressed out and inadequate. Consider setting up a schedule with other relatives and friends to ensure that someone is checking in regularly. [See our recommendations for apps and digital platforms that facilitate family caregiving coordination.](#)

Use community resources for social engagement. Does your loved one complain that they have no one to talk to? Connect them with a social-engagement program! Some examples include the [AARP Friendly Voice](#) program, and the 24-hour Friendship Line operated by the [National Institute on Aging](#). Your area agency on aging can provide you with more information and resources in your local community.

More Resources to Help Caregivers Stay Connected

- [Staying in Touch with Loved Ones in Nursing Homes and Long-Term Care Facilities](#)
- [Best Way to Make Video Calls to Seniors with Alzheimer's or Dementia in Nursing Homes](#)

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