



## FamilyLifeConnect

# The importance of family and friends

Sometimes when you are experiencing a low mood you can feel disconnected from everyday life, and people.

However, staying connected with family, friends and colleagues who care about you is a vital step in getting better.

Your low mood can affect the way you think about yourself and how you think others see you. It is common to have negative feelings of shame, self-loathing and guilt. Many people feeling this way will avoid contact with family and friends because of the mistaken belief that they are a burden to others and not worthy of their consideration. Distancing yourself in this way will likely only increase the feeling of isolation, and can make you feel worse.

Connecting with others is important to improving your mood. Our lives are more enriched by our relationships, encouraging us to care for each other, keep looking forward and make plans for the future.

It may take some effort to stay in touch with your family and friends but the support you receive from them will likely reduce your feelings of isolation. People can lift each other up when they are going through difficult times, often resulting in more meaningful relationships in the long run.

### Try using some of these techniques for staying connected with friends and family:

- **Make the effort to reach out.** Do something with a friend, your partner or child. This might be something small, like having a coffee together, going for a walk or watching TV.
- **Try 'active-listening' – that is, attentive listening to people to make you feel more connected to them.** This is a mindfulness technique that helps to keep you present in the moment by listening to sounds. Really listen –concentrate on the words the other person is saying.
- **Be honest with those close to you.** Tell them how you have been feeling and what you are going through. If you feel capable, even tell them how they can support you. It is likely that your low mood has affected the way you behave. Being honest will help others understand why.
- **Share your strategies on getting better with those close to you.** If you can, ask if they mind being included in your daily schedule –such as a walk or coffee together. Giving those who care about you practical things they can do to provide support, will benefit both of you.
- **Choose your confidants wisely.** When you are feeling unhappy you need people around you who are genuinely concerned about your wellbeing; not people who are unreliable or critical of you.

- **Practise small acts of kindness for those you care about.** For example, send a text message or write a card for someone you know is also going through a tough time. The boost you will get from doing something nice for someone else is likely to far outweigh the pleasure they receive and the effort it takes from you.
- **Don't be afraid to ask for support.** Ask for support from your family, friends, doctor or mentor etc. Admitting that you need support is not always easy, but will be important in helping you feel better again.

**Remember, your genuine relationships can survive this period.** Real life has its good and bad times, and your family and friends are prepared for this – just as you would be if they were going through a similar struggle. There will probably be a time when you will be of great help and comfort to the people who are currently supporting you.

The **FamilyLifeConnect** service is funded by the South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network.



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communities*

The information in this document is general advice only. The advice within it may therefore not apply to your circumstances and is not intended to replace the advice of a healthcare professional.

### **FamilyLifeConnect**

**FamilyLifeConnect** is a free service that puts people living in the Greater Dandenong community in touch with mentors. They can support your wellbeing and help you achieve your goals.

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 **Book an appointment online  
at [www.familylife.com.au/familylifeconnect](http://www.familylife.com.au/familylifeconnect)**