



## Keeping Connected

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We've all got the picture now regarding the pandemic. It's going to go on for a while, we don't really understand it, and we're just going to have to suck it up and keep moving on. We are doing it bravely, carefully, and thoughtfully on a day-to-day basis. But physical safety and care is only one aspect of maintenance during the pandemic. Connection is extremely important.



About a week ago I talked to a cousin of mine with whom I haven't spoken in probably a year and a half. She had read my article, and, I assume, thought, "It would be good to connect with Wendy and see what she's up to." As we spoke, we realized how much had happened. Changes in the status of our children, changes in the status of our health, and all the other changes in our lives. I left the conversation feeling refreshed and with a new sense of membership in my family. This is something that is so easily lost.

My clients these days, whether alone or living with others, find isolation lonely. Yes, I think it's worse to be sitting in a small space by yourself day after day, but I'm always surprised by the people who live with others and still feel lonely. This is because one person cannot meet all of our needs for connection and contact.

I'm sure some of you have heard me talk about the concept of creating a mosaic of people in your lives. I love the image because there are people who provide very different things at very different times. There are the people you go out to dinner with, there are those you stay home and watch Netflix with, those you travel with, and so on. These are often very different people. Unfortunately, in this time of pandemic we easily lose touch with all but a few of those people.

What about the richness of the conversation with my cousin? This is a person who has literally known me since I was born. During our childhood we resented mightily being thrown together all the time, forced to interact and hang out with each other for interminable hours while the grown-ups did whatever they were doing. But those times, whether we liked each other or not, created a bond of shared experiences and a rich tapestry of a common history. These memories formed who we are. There is a strong need in our current isolation to reach out to people who have shared time with us.

Now is the time to call the people you used to work with who you've lost touch with, and laugh about your terrible boss, or how ugly your workspace was. This is the time to call the person that you used to meet up with only when you were jogging in the park, enjoying the hour that you spent together every week.

Humans are pack animals. We seek validation and connection through our pack, whether that is a chosen pack, a familial pack, or both. I find that the minor annoyances or silly issues I may have had with somebody that seemed so important at the time fall away in the face of quarantine. I also find that it's easier to say "I love you" to the friends in my life who have given me so much. Maybe we never had a habit of saying that before, but it feels like now is a good time to tell people that you care. Love comes in many flavors and sizes, and being unable to sit down have a meal, hug or simply touch hands with the various people in our life is a great loss that needs to be acknowledged— and to whatever degree we can, ameliorated.

I have begun to set aside time every weekend to make a few calls. Of course there are the regulars, but there are also calls to those I haven't been connecting with. For the most part they're very happy to hear for me. And if not, what have I really lost by reaching out?

This huge amount of space and empty time allows us the ability to seek reconciliation, forgiveness, the creation of new bonds and healing of old ones. Perhaps when we were busy all the time it was easy to forget all the

connections in our life and the beautiful web that is our life. So let's explore. Perhaps slights, insults, fights, and missteps are not so important in the face of something as large as a global pandemic.

Maybe one of the things we can learn from this experience is to prioritize the importance of our life experience. And I will tell you that my connections with the people I care about, with all of you, are essential to who I am.

Namaste,

Wendy