

#weekly WISDOM

Intimacy During COVID-19

This message is brought to you by Katrina Clark, Youth Educator at the Advocacy Center– a proud partner of the Community Coalition for Healthy Youth. If you questions or would like more information, please contact us via the information provided. Thank you in advance for sharing this information!

While many are quick to associate intimacy with sex, or some form of physical exchange between romantic partners, intimacy is *not* exclusively physical. In fact, we experience different expressions of intimacy in varying degrees across a surprisingly wide range of relationships. Take, for example, how offering to share some of your lunch with a new friend can serve as a subtle yet strong point of connection, or how catching the eye of a passing stranger can feel quite intimate. Of course, we all have different ideas of what is indeed intimate for us, or not.

When intimacy is intentional and consensual, it can be a really wonderful, growth-inducing, and vitalizing experience.

With “social distancing” as the new norm for now, we may believe that our opportunities to build intimacy with others have been largely squelched. While we grieve the loss of familiar means of connecting, there are still plenty of existing ways to experience and foster intimacy that respect the current needs of the collective. Health guidelines concerning COVID-19 are primarily focused on *physically* distancing ourselves from one another. The popularized phrase of “social distancing” prevails, although there are plenty of ways we can continue to be social at this time.

Fortunately, long-distance relationships– having existed long before COVID-19– provide a functioning blueprint of how intimacy can be maintained even as we are apart. The following are some digital date ideas that can help you connect with those you are unable to meet with in person. Note: just because we use the term ‘date.’ this does not mean these ideas only apply to those who are romantically involved– they are perfectly suited for friends, family members, and other non-romantic connections!

Digital Date Ideas: Make a [shared / collaborative Spotify playlist](#) that you can both add songs to, watch movies or TV shows together, read the same book together, play 20 Questions or other get-to-know-you games, share recipes; maybe even try making the same dish, create a digital photo album together, coffee tea date, art-making/doodle-date, or virtual “vacation” together using virtual tour sites.

Intimacy, of course, is not restricted to two people. We see it alive in friend groups, amongst co-workers, and within families. There are also ways you can build a sense of intimacy with those in your neighborhood or larger community. During this time, you may create a colorful poster to hang in a window that is visible from the street, or maybe write a hopeful message with chalk on the sidewalk in front of your home! We encourage you to get creative with your efforts to increase a sense of intimacy, and decrease a sense of isolation.

While we are connecting in these creative ways, we do want to make sure we are aware of potential red flags - particularly on digital platforms.

This [‘What is Digital Abuse?’](#) resource from [loveisrespect.org](#) highlights how social networking and texting can be used to bully, harass, stalk or intimidate a partner. Additionally, their [‘Social Networking Safety’](#) resource provides some tips about how to stay safe on social media. If you experience digital abuse, we suggest you consider utilizing the national resource we have just highlighted [loveisrespect.org](#) which has call, text, or chat volunteers available. Or, call the Advocacy Center of Tompkins County at 607-277-5000.

Remember, intimacy exists on a broad spectrum. During these times of “social distancing,” our need for intimacy may be more pronounced. Through a variety of creative efforts, we are able to sustain, and even further develop intimacy with others. While it is important to be mindful of digital dangers, engaging through digital platforms is a great way to connect!

We are all in this together. Take care and be well.

www.actompkins.org/get-help/covid-19-agency-updates/

During this stay at home/stay in place time some children, teens and adults are in situations which have increased their risk of abuse. The Advocacy Center is here to help, by offering crisis, advocacy, support, and shelter services to victims and survivors of domestic violence, dating abuse, sexual assault, and child sexual abuse in Tompkins County. Anyone who has concerns about the safety or well being of a child or teen can call the Advocacy Center 24-Hour Hotline (607-277-5000) to discuss ways to support youth while physical distancing guidelines are in place.

#actompkins #weeklywisdom



Our Community Partners: Alcohol & Drug Council of Tompkins County, Tompkins County Youth Services, TST BOCES Youth Development Program, Tompkins County Health Department, The Advocacy Center, Cooperative Extension– Tompkins County, Catholic Charities– Tompkins/Tioga