

Ideas for Connecting

Connecting with loved ones living in long-term care



come
alive

Vancouver
CoastalHealth

Health
Design
Lab.

EMILY
CARR
UNIVERSITY
OF ART + DESIGN

What is this guide?

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many changes to the ways we connect with our loved ones living in long-term care homes. For many of us, we are now learning to connect in new ways through video calls, phone calls and physically distanced visits. With these changes in mind, we want to support families in coming up with new ideas for how to connect with loved ones living in long-term care homes.

In September 2020, Vancouver Coastal Health teamed up with the Health Design Lab at Emily Carr University of Art and Design to hold 3 Zoom

workshops inviting family members of people living in long-term care homes to join us in coming up with **AS MANY IDEAS AS POSSIBLE** for how to connect. The ideas, collected from over 40 families, are shared here.

We hope that these ideas may inspire you to connect with your loved ones in a new way and provide useful suggestions for you.

This is just the start! If you have an idea you'd like to add to this list, or feedback to share, please fill this form: surveymonkey.ca/r/ConnectLTC

Come Alive These family workshops are one part of a larger Vancouver Coastal Health Project called Come Alive. This project is about energizing, giving choice & voice, respecting and including the person in long-term care in every moment to enhance their quality of life and their experience of care. This includes incorporating best practices in gerontology and the appropriate use of anti-psychotics.

Hi, there!

There are many different ways in which we can connect with our loved ones. On the following pages you'll find ideas for connecting through:

In-person
Visits

Items to
Drop-off

Phone/Video
Calls

Community
Projects

Technology

Ideas for In-Person Visits



What are in-person visits?

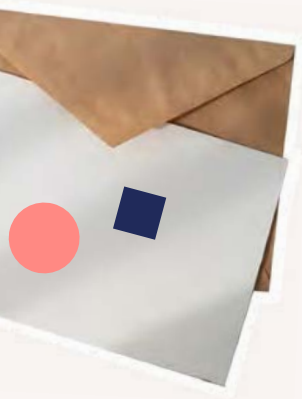
In-person visits can offer much needed time to connect face to face. Although there may be physical separation, there are many opportunities to get creative with how you interact with each other!

In-person visits in most care homes require loved ones to stay 6 ft apart and may be inside or outside. In-person visits may look different at your specific care home, so be sure to check with your care home for current information.



Here are some ideas to help make this personal time fulfilling for you and your loved one:

- Bring photos or other objects to show off during your visit. Depending on your care home, you may be able to pass some of these items to your loved one after they have been sanitized. Objects that can be easily wiped down by sanitation cloths are ideal.
- Bring a book, newspaper, or other writing to read out loud during your visit.
- Ask friends and family members to write letters and postcards that can be brought to the care home and read out loud.
- Take videos of friends and family members waving & saying “Hi” that you can play on a phone/tablet/laptop during your visit.
- Bring a jigsaw, sudoku, brain teaser, or other puzzles to work on together.
- Save some funny videos from Youtube or other online sites to share and laugh about during your visits using a tablet or phone.
- Play music during your visit using your phone or a portable music device. Wireless headphones or a speaker might help too.
- For window visits, you can make large signs and posters by hand that have pictures, drawings, or affirming writing on them and hold them up for your loved one to see!

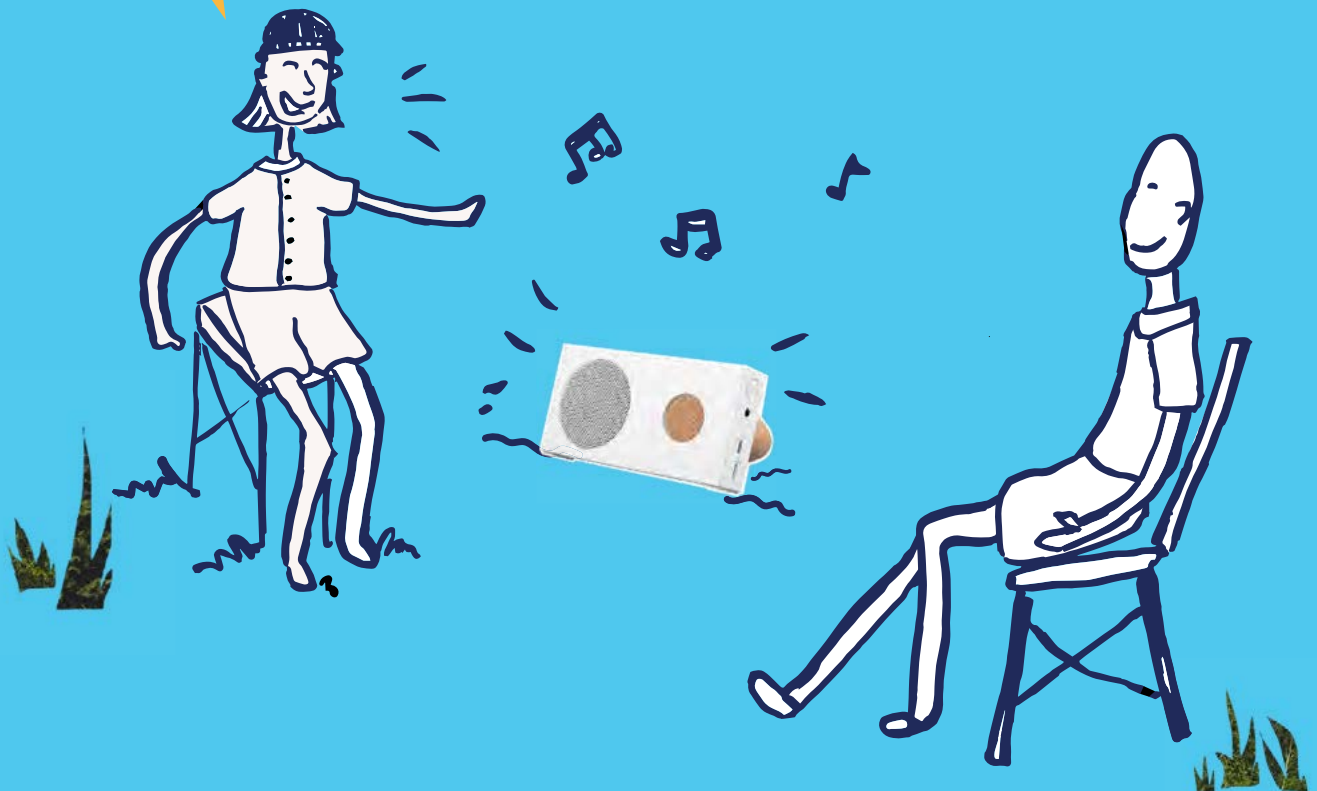


Tips!



Physical distancing can make it hard to hear each other, or hard to hear music or videos you might bring. It might be helpful to bring a small portable wireless speaker or headphones for your loved one to hear sounds from your phone/tablet better.

“My dad loves music. I brought a bluetooth speaker to my visit with him and he loved it! I sang along and it made him smile and laugh.”



“Our family made a big poster and brought it to our window visit to show Grandpa our love! We could see his smiles through the window!”



Ideas for Drop-offs



What are drop-offs/ send-ins?

Although there may not always be the opportunity to physically interact with your loved one, in many care homes there is the opportunity to drop off physical items to your loved one, or virtually send items through e-mail.

Sent objects can act as small reminders for your loved one that you care and are thinking of them, even if you are unable to be physically close to them. These objects can also be sent in advance of other phone calls and in-person visits as a conversation starter, or as props to help with activities.



Here are some ideas for objects to drop off at care homes and to send to your loved one:

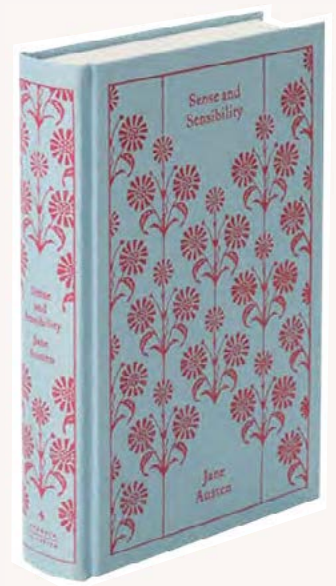
Drop-offs (physical objects to be delivered to the care home)

- Send in your loved one's favourite food. You may even be able to share a cup or plate together during a Zoom or phone call, or distanced visit.
- Check with local stores and restaurants to see if they will deliver to the care home, for example food or flowers.
- Drop off nostalgic objects, trinkets, or keepsakes that your loved one would enjoy.
- Create a "Family Tree" inspired poster or collage with photos your family that can be put up on your loved one's wall.
- You can make customized unique objects such as mugs, hug pillows, bobble heads with family members' pictures on them (there are companies and stores that can assist you with this).





- If your loved one is an animal person a way to give them physical companionship could be dropping off an electronic pet (eg. dog/cat)
- For the holidays you can think about dropping off decorations to decorate your loved one's space. These could even be handmade by you and your family!
- Send letters and notes to your loved one. You can talk to your care home to see about the possibility of your letters being read aloud by staff.
- Does your loved one have a favourite book, magazine or newspaper? Try dropping off a hard copy of one of these. Tip: You can look for large print versions of these books or modify them yourself.





Here are some ideas for things to send to your loved one virtually:

- Record a video of you and others talking and sharing updates. Email the video to your care home for a staff person to show your loved one. This can be helpful if phone calls are hard to arrange and will allow your loved one to watch your message multiple times.
- Create a virtual “mixtape” or playlist of songs or videos that can be emailed to your loved one. You can include songs that they grew up with or that they have a special fondness for
- Write up a newsletter that can be emailed to your loved one every so often, or printed out by your care home staff. You can include updates on you and your families activities, as well as photos and videos, or anything else you think your loved one would enjoy.
- To help engage your loved one with your experiences or environments outside of the care home you can record audio from walks and daily life. Try recording sounds from nature (like waves on the ocean) or something you know your loved one enjoys!

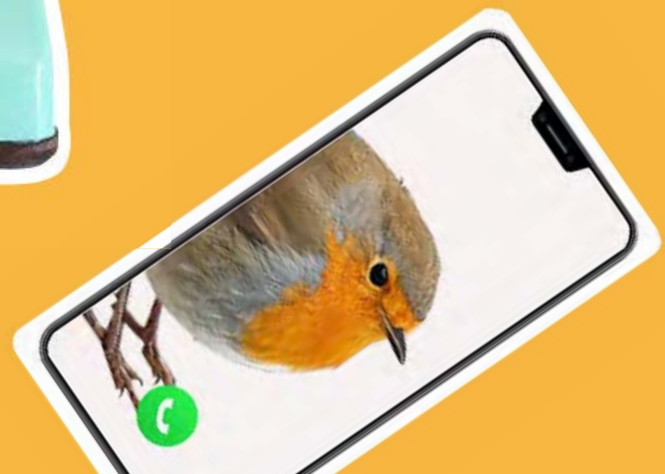
Tip: You can use your phone to record and bring them to an in-person visit (bringing a speaker to your in-person visit might help them hear it a little louder and clearer) or send them to your loved one.



**“I dropped off a pillow for my partner.
It has a photo of me printed on it so
when my partner feels like a hug they
always have the pillow nearby!”**



Ideas for Phone Calls



What are phone calls?

Phone calls can be a valuable way to hear and see your loved one when distance or COVID prevents you from meeting in person. Calls can use video, such as Zoom, or only use audio. How can you use sound and video to create special moments for you and your loved one(s)?

Phone calls may look different at your specific care home, so be sure to check with your care homes website for current information.



Here are some ideas that can help make your next phone call meaningful:

- Record audio or video of family members that you can play during your call.
- Listen to a song together. Play on a speaker while on your phone call. Do you have a favourite musician in common or is there one you know your loved one enjoys?
- Read aloud to your loved one. This can be from a favourite book or a community newsletter!
- If you have sent or dropped off special objects for your loved one you can choose to talk about them during your call.



“When I call my grandma I read her a page from her favourite book. She puts her phone on speaker and listens to the story.”



Ideas for Community Projects



What are community projects?

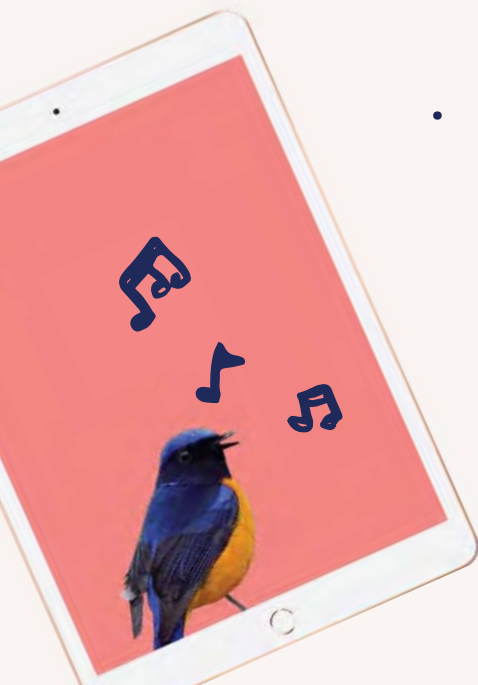
Community Projects allow small, medium or large groups to share their talents, resources, care and time to create memorable activities and events that can be shared at your loved ones care home. These projects can involve other families, local businesses, schools or other community groups.

Who might you know who would be interested in helping with one of these projects?



Here are some ideas that can be put together with groups in your community:

- Invite schools and teachers to have their students write letters or draw pictures for members of the care home.
- Invite choirs, bands, or other musicians from the community to host an outdoor concert at the care home.
- Ask local artists or illustrators to draw portraits of people in the care home.
- If there are trees or bushes outside your care home's windows, invite groups to decorate them with encouraging and affirming signs and decorations.
- As the holidays approach, check with your care home to see if you could drop off decorations for them to put up that are made by the community or schools.
- Reach out to your friends and family to do drive-by parades for special occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, or holidays.
- Join your care home's family council. If your care home does not currently have one, you could try starting one or explore other ways of connecting with your care home community.





“We reached out to my daughter’s teacher and asked the class to make some decorations for outside my mom’s window at her care home. It helps us feel closer to her and gives the kids a chance to be creative!”

Ideas for Technology



Helpful available technology.



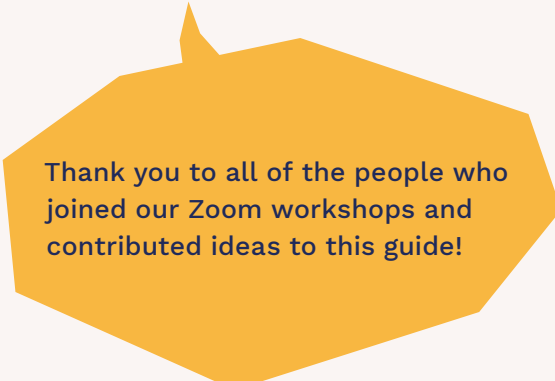
We heard from families of a few specific technologies and apps that they find helpful.

What other ideas do you have?

Thank you for exploring this document! We hope that these ideas inspire you to connect with your loved ones in a new way and provide useful suggestions for you. Now it's your turn to try putting these ideas into action! We hope that you can use and adapt these ideas to best suit you and your loved ones specific needs and circumstances in order to connect and share time together in a fun and fulfilling way.

If you try something, we would love to hear how it went! You can send us feedback through this form: surveymonkey.ca/r/ConnectLTC

You can also send in suggestions for new or modified ideas that we can share in the next version of this guide.



Thank you to all of the people who joined our Zoom workshops and contributed ideas to this guide!



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