

## **Connection**

Loneliness happens when a gap exists between your desired level of social-connection and how much of it you actually get. While short term loneliness may feel uncomfortable, long-term loneliness is actually scientifically proven to be bad for your health. Loneliness increases your risk of dementia, heart disease, stroke, depression, and anxiety. Therefore, it is essential that we support our kids and other members of our family in building community and connection around themselves, especially during stressful times.

### **Ways to build community:**

- Keep up with friendships that make you feel good. Even if you can't be together physically, try to video chat, send pictures or videos to each other, or write letters. Share your milestones with them, your wins, and your setbacks, so that they can support you every step of the way.
  - Don't just rely on social media for this, as too much social media can make your feelings of loneliness worse. Studies show that excessive social media use can lead to feelings of isolation and anxiety. Be sure to limit the amount of time you spend on social media daily, and try to consistently decrease it by 15-30 minutes every week until you are spending less than 1 hour per day on social media.
- If allowed by your doctor, safely participate in social events and gatherings.
- Give back. Volunteering is a great way meet new people and find purpose in your community.
- Join a club that meets regularly that pertains to one of your hobbies or interests. Or find a new hobby you'd like to try!

### **Helpful Connection Resources:**

- Where to volunteer in Gainesville:  
<http://www.gainesvillevolunteer.com/where-to-volunteer/>
- National Volunteer Match: <https://www.volunteermatch.org/>