

How technology has become an indispensable social tool during the current coronavirus crisis

March 26 2020, by Dr Daria Kuss



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In these unprecedented times of the global spread of COVID-19, or coronavirus, our daily lives are impacted by considerable changes in how

we work and socialize. Due to social distancing measures, for those of us lucky enough to work in offices, much of our work is now being engaged in remotely, using the capabilities of modern technology. At the same time, we use technology to stay connected with our loved ones. Other than the risk the coronavirus poses to our physical health, the associated change in lifestyle poses considerable challenges to our mental health and wellbeing. The required strategy of social distancing may leave individuals feeling isolated and depressed, and concerns about the health of ourselves and the most vulnerable in our communities may lead to anxiety and increased stress.

However, when it comes to [social contact](#), [social distancing](#) may be a misnomer—we want to keep physically distant, whilst staying socially close. This is one of the key strategies I would advocate now—coming together as families, friends and communities, even if this means to come together from a physical distance. During this coronavirus crisis, technology has become an indispensable social tool, which allows us to practice self-care and engage in community support. Over the course of the last couple of weeks, I have been inspired and motivated by the people around me through technology, and have had smiles put on my face on a regular basis by people reaching out via a large number of online platforms and apps. Although we are in many cases not able to pop our head around the corner of our office to chat to our colleagues at work, we may be able to have virtual conversations and team meetings via Microsoft Teams. My colleagues and I have used this platform in creative ways to engage in joint virtual yoga sessions, not just increasing our [social capital](#), but looking after our physical and [mental health](#) at the same time.

One of the Italian members of the International Women's Network I am part of reached out to our community by email, detailing the situation and outlining ways in which we need to come together and support each other, leading to an avalanche of women around the world who are part

of this network sharing their experiences, worries, words of wisdom and encouragement. This builds solidarity and a sense of belonging, which are crucial to our wellbeing. As [social animals](#), we require social groups and the importance of being connected becomes ever clearer in unprecedented times like these. It also allows us to get an insight into different perspectives, where perhaps the empty supermarket shelves in our communities may not be viewed as catastrophically as they otherwise may have been, considering individuals in different countries may be impacted much more severely, and state measures being much stricter.

Another fantastic way of increasing our mental health and wellbeing during this [coronavirus](#) pandemic is using [Google Hangouts](#) for virtual gatherings with friends. Who said that restaurant and pub closures should put a hold on our social lives? A friend of mine recently celebrated her birthday on Google Hangouts with friends from different countries cheering with their respective glasses of wine, making for a very sociable and fun night indeed. And why not try [Zoom](#) for book club meetings? And Skype for Red Tents, allowing you to connect and share in virtual, yet socially proximal ways?

For those of us who find it difficult not to be able to have their cultural needs met with theaters, cinemas and museums having closed, why not make use of a wide variety of online cultural offerings? [The Royal Opera House](#) will stream past productions for free. BroadwayLH lets you watch your favorite musicals for free. [Google Arts and Culture](#)'s Frida Kahlo exhibition lets you engage with her work online. These are excellent opportunities to be inspired and awed. If all else fails, there's always Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Youtube!

Last but not least, and this is my go-to non-tech-related tip, why not boost how you feel by taking your dog out? Or offer to take your friend's/neighbor's/colleague's dog out? In the days where not just the [retail stores](#) and gyms are closed, but where many parks and recreational

areas are now shut, let's spend time with our four-legged friends, as they will most definitely raise the wellbeing bar!

These are unprecedented times which offer us unprecedented ways for engaging with our various communities—admittedly, we won't be spared from worrying entirely, but at the same time we are being taught to be kind, compassionate and creative. Let's be open and observant of the new lessons we are being given, as they may change our lives.

More information: Find out more about Dr Daria Kuss' research:
[www.ntu.ac.uk/staff-profiles/s ... -sciences/daria-kuss](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/staff-profiles/s...-sciences/daria-kuss)

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