

Connecting Across the Miles: Long Distance Family Relationships

Family members often experience geographical separation that can occur over a few days, months, or even years. Parents, children, siblings, spouses, and other extended family members are often faced with situations in which they are required to live apart from one another. A broad range of reasons exist for geographical separation including educational attainment, career changes and advancement, job-related travel, military deployment, and missionary work. Separation brings about changes in family roles, responsibilities, and routines, creating obstacles to building strong, resilient families. Living apart may cause stress, but families can strengthen relationships and stay connected by employing a few strategies.

1. Establish communication routines. Strong relationships are built on trust and security and people thrive when they have routines and expectations they can depend on.
2. Take advantage of available technology. Family members can remain connected through calling, emailing, texting, video chatting, blogging, etc.
3. Work on maintaining relationship satisfaction. Despite the distance, it is important to listen, pay attention, and acknowledge the feelings of other family members to ensure that each member feels nurtured and validated.
4. Be creative in efforts to remain connected. Family members can be “together” even if they are miles apart. Read the same book or watch the same movie, and then spend time discussing it. Sending care packages on important dates will make family members feel extra special.

Long distance relationships are a reality for many families, causing stress and disconnection among family members. However, family relationships can be maintained and strengthened by incorporating strategies to remain connected.

Resource: www.twoofus.org