

Social Distancing: How Are We All Doing?

Social Distancing: How Are We All Doing?

In our current pandemic world, social distancing is the major tool being used to minimize new Covid-19 cases. Epidemiologists recognize the value of isolation, but mental health experts worry about the long-term impacts on our emotional well-being. Fortunately, there are an abundance of ways to fight loneliness, and an informal survey of Notre Dame senior alumni reveals many of their strategies.

	<i>A Zoom Easter for Jack Bergen '77</i>

Before discussing remedies, however, we asked how our alumni's lives have changed as a result of the pandemic isolation policy. We received a range of responses. As for workday disruptions, many senior alumni are retired or already work from home, so these routines weren't seriously impacted. Although, as **Sharon McAuliffe '74** points out, "I have had to learn new technology skills, like video conferencing."

Some have had adult children move back home. **Betty Wood '77** lives on Long Island and reports "My 26-year-old son moved back seven weeks ago from Brooklyn. His career in film has essentially been shut down for the foreseeable future. Luckily, we're getting along quite well." L.A.-based **Cindy Lupica '80** had two adult sons move back, and is learning how to live with the concomitant "space and volume issues" of four adults suddenly having to live together in 24/7 peace and harmony.

Others are experiencing the opposite, cut off from beloved children, grandchildren, and elderly parents. **Sheila Padden '78** has a

	<i>Drive-by for Gary Sobolewski's son</i>

daughter who gave birth to twins just a couple of weeks ago, making Sheila and her husband **Mike '78** new grandparents. They so want to hold their new grandbabies. The daughter of **Sue Matson '77** is due in late September, but she lives in Seattle while Sue lives in Chicago. Sue worries they will not be able to travel to meet the new baby and help out. Chicago-based **Chris Burke '79** has parents in their 90s. Normally, she'd travel to Buffalo to spend time with them. But now "being with them is just a risk I don't feel I should take." The mother of **Mary Ann Topping '79** is in an Alzheimer's facility. Her health is deteriorating, but the place is under quarantine and Mary Ann can't visit.

Some people are going a little stir-crazy. "I'm a gregarious person by nature, and I thrive on the social and interactive parts of my workday. That's no longer available, and it's frustrating," says **Bill Schneider '75**. **Gary Sobolewski '74** misses golf – "It's driving me nuts!"

Luckily, everyone has assembled their own set of coping mechanisms. "Keeping to a schedule" is a major piece of advice. Virginia-based **Sheryl Switaj '78** is a big fan: "I'm keeping on schedule: Daily workout, work, walks on the trails while talking on the phone with friends, and bi-weekly Zoom meetings with my old Badin crew."

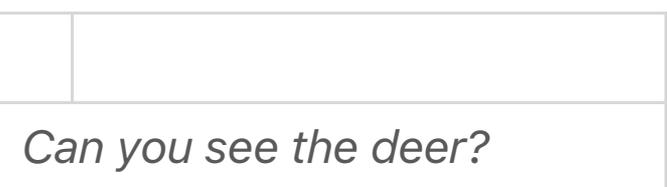
Jigsaw puzzles, nature watching, old movies, cooking, and reading remain great standbys.

Dan Kimball '68 lives up in the northwest

corner of the "Lower 48." He sent the picture of the doe. "She hides her fauns under my office window." And Dan looks out each day to keep watch.

Faith-based activities help. "I start my day reading FaithND with a cup of coffee," says **Maryanne Rogers '76**. "This really helps focus me." Others point to virtual Sunday Mass celebration and livestreaming the Grotto Rosary every Friday. **Dick Schreit '53** turns to EWTN on a regular basis.

Virtual meet-ups with friends and family cheer everyone up. "We've started

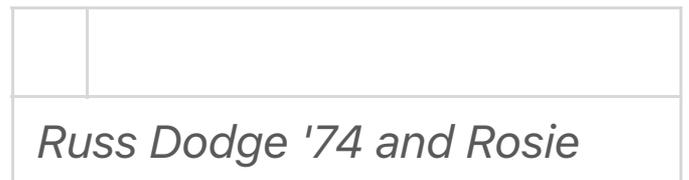


a Saturday evening Zoom cocktail hour to replace our weekly family dinner," describes **Mike Boone '66**. "Virtual happy hours are a different experience," says **Mike Schnaus '75**. "We need more practice!"

Visits of all kinds are being tried. Sobolewski coordinated a drive-by on Easter for his son's birthday. And everyone Facetimes with their grandkids. **Jack Bergen '77** and his husband take it one step further. "Every week, we send family members a small treat or snack via Amazon to give them a smile and let them know we're thinking of them."

Newly-adopted pets can enrich people lives too. **Russ Dodge '74** and his wife just adopted Rosie, a two-year-old Great Pyrenees who needs a lot of love and training. **Joe Hornett '76** adopted a new puppy "even though our new house comes with a yard of mud. In football, this would be recognized as piling on."

The recurring theme of these responses is resilience and optimism. While fully recognizing the horror of this pandemic, our senior alumni are also finding silver linings. Betty Wood retired long ago but is a volunteer EMT. She recently took on additional shifts due to the virus. Because of her EMT experiences, "my patience, sympathy, and perspective have increased a great deal."



Sheila Padden looks around and finds that the slower pace agrees with her. "I've been struck by how staying at home has conjured a feeling of yesteryear. Over the weekend in Chicago, we walked around our south side neighborhood, and people were out in their yards visiting, kids were playing, and life abounded on every block. Pre-virus, hardly anyone would be out, even on a beautiful day. I think our busy schedules had us racing around and simply not home."

To all of our fellow seniors and their families: Be safe. Connect. And stay positive!

NDSA Media Links:

Facebook: [ND Senior Alumni Facebook Group](#)

Newsletter Email: goldendomer@alumni.nd.edu

Website: [ND Senior Alumni Home](#)