

“Physical Distancing”

The new phrase, “social distancing”-- we hear it every day. But we have a big problem with it. Yes, it is totally necessary to be prudent and stay safe by reducing the chance of contagion by keeping apart. But that good habit in a pandemic is really **physical** distancing-- staying physically distant from others. But asking people to be “socially distant”? A bad idea, not at all what is needed. All human beings need social closeness, need social engagement, need **love**—and people who are disabled, elderly or poor may need it even more. Loneliness is more hazardous to our health than coronavirus. So the trick is, how can we practice **physical** distancing, and at the same time sustain and create freely given **social** relationships? A few practical suggestions.



Get outdoors, and say hello to every person you meet. More people are walking these days, so join them (six feet apart). Our friends Pat and Chris Charyk gather two or four or six people almost every winter afternoon around their front yard fire-pit, with hot drinks. Our colleague Chenine Peloquin last spring put a picnic table in her front yard and painted it turquoise—the better to attract passers-by into conversation. “If you build it, they will come.” Notice in both ideas it was the **front** yard—be welcoming! In the spring, recruit a neighbor to organize together a block party or a community garden or a bicycle rally.

Many people with disabilities have been idled from their usual routines. Use that time to create the building blocks of new or future relationships. For instance, if you are fascinated by a virtual tour of a museum, then how might we parlay that to build a friendship? Join an on-line course? Join the Friends of the Museum? Use home time to build skills for future relationships, as well as to explore interests?

Of course we can sustain relationships by social media. And by “social media” we don’t mean only Facebook and Zoom. Writing or dictating a letter is using social media! So is making a phone call. Or send a picture postcard. Ask yourself, who in my life would be thrilled to get a home-made card, or a letter or call? Work on coming across positively on Zoom calls, so the person one is getting to know will be most welcoming and most respectful. Our colleague Robin Marques works with people to arrange the space and walls in back of them, so when they go on Zoom, there are things that reflect their valued roles in life—posters of their favorite team or artist, books or plants or foods that announce their passions in life.

And don’t be afraid to try **direct invitations** to new friendships. Reach out to a fellow church member, a neighbor, another passionate home chef—with whom might one connect in order to turn an acquaintance into a new friend? Many people these days are isolated, so they may be more likely to say “Yes.” Invite two people you know to share one another’s gifts. **Matchmaking**—it could change two people’s lives! Try it, or try it for a loved one.

What else can you think of? Begin **now** to overcome physical distancing with **social closening**.

-- Katie Driscoll and Jack Yates



People who fill roles that are valued by others (example: photographer, employee, co-worker, voter, musician, volunteer, college student) will be granted the good things of life.

To our Nemasket Group Friends and Family,

We must all do everything we possibly can to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and related deaths, and this includes getting vaccinated, regular testing, physical distancing, and wearing a mask when in the company of others not directly within our personal "bubble".

Like other states across the country, Massachusetts has begun delivering COVID-19 vaccines statewide. *The Nemasket Group* has a responsibility to do everything we can to prevent COVID-19 infections and deaths, and that includes making sure there is access to safe-vaccines. This is why *The Nemasket Group* has partnered with Walgreens to offer vaccination clinics for individuals we support residentially, and our employees...those folks eligible for Phase I vaccinations per Governor Baker.

Massachusetts has the **third highest death rate** of COVID-19 in the nation. That said, in addition to vaccination clinics, *The Nemasket Group* has also been providing appropriate personal protective equipment to our employees, and offering COVID-19 testing for eligible employees and individuals receiving residential services from the organization.

Visit mass.gov or cdc.gov to learn more about COVID-19 and how to slow the spread.

Dustin Green
Executive Director



Courtesy of Syracuse Cultural Workers, art by Karen Kerney



#5KYOURWAY

You choose the day between May 1st thru May 31st to walk/run your favorite route to support and raise awareness for The Nemasket Group. Take a selfie showing your support and we will post it on our website and Facebook page.

Visit our website: www.nemasketgroup.org



<https://www.facebook.com/nemasketgroup>

Thank you to everyone who supported our Holiday Basket and Winter Raffle!

Congratulations to the winners of our Holiday Basket Raffle:

The Mandalorian – Frank & Rosemary L.
Sweet – Joe C.
Starlite Drive-In – Alicia D.
Fresh Fruit – Tom R.
Rosebud Cottage – Kim L.
Brooklyn Bridge – Bill B.

Winter Festival will return in Dec 2021!!!