Surviving social distancing

The coronavirus pandemic is upending our way of life and health officials agree that to prevent its spread, social distancing has become essential. It really doesn't mean the days ahead are doomed though; you just have to get a little creative. Here are a few ideas:

Make a list. Schedule a plan of activities so you have the satisfaction of achievement at the end of the day and the week (but hopefully not the month!)

Pick up the phone. Social media, texting and messaging have overtaken phone calls as the first line of communication for many. But that was always balanced with talking face to face as well. Right now, a chat on the phone can really boost your morale, and that of your friends and your family. Even if you find all you are talking about is the crisis, as the phrase goes, "it's good to talk".

Set up a virtual book club. Catch up on reading - you don't need libraries as you can download some e-books or audiobooks. Include your friends and create a virtual book club and group FaceTime each other to discuss.

Be a culture vulture. Take a virtual museum tour. You could go to the

Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum or even the Guggenheim in New York City. Many museums offer a similar experience on your smartphone. Google Arts & Culture has a collection of virtual walk-throughs for dozens of international museums, from Paris to New Delhi.

Be a film critic. Catch up with recent Oscar winners and maybe share your thoughts with some social interaction on Facebook or Twitter. Choose an actor and watch all their films in chronological order to see if their acting has improved or actually got worse.

Learn a language. Probably something you think about doing every time you go on holiday. Learning a few phrases in another tongue will make you ready for next time. Keeps the mind active, too.

Tax the brain. There are loads of puzzles online and apps available to test you, even if it's just to test your vocabulary. Start with

Love Local's own puzzle page on p.14.

Experiment in the kitchen. For foodies out there, make that recipe that's been sitting in the drawer for years. Or read your cookbooks and find new recipes to tackle for when this is all over. Use up some of those more obscure tins and packets in the back of the cupboard - just watch those 'Use By' dates.

Enjoy the great outdoors. Getting out will improve your general health. The fresh air will clear your mind and help you notice things about the world around you that you didn't see before. If you are really stuck at home, learn the names of plants and trees in your garden.

Get organised. Not quite so appealing but you could always sort out your paperwork, your Will and your taxes - all the stuff you've been putting off for years. Clear out your wardrobe; if you've not worn it for a

year or two, will you really wear it again?

Start birdwatching. Coronavirus doesn't bother them. Dust off some binoculars if you've got some and find out what species nest near you, you may be surprised.

Order in. Get all the takeaway food menus out of the drawer and order a takeout, because that way you are supporting local restaurants who need your help right now.

Meditate. Now is the time to slow down and empty your mind. Time to relax, have a nap.

Treat yourself. Use up all those facial kits and beauty treatments you've promised to treat yourself to. Foot souffles, hot oil hair treatments - you'll look even better than before isolation. You could try styling your hair differently. For the first time in a long time, you'll have time.