**I miss peer interaction**

In planning for 2020, none of us could ever have imagined that social distancing would become an integral part of our lives and engagement with others. Yet we need to distinguish between “physical distancing” and “social distancing”. While online learning occurs at a physical distance from lecturers, peers and even campus, this does not necessarily imply social distance as well.

Peer or social interaction offers proven emotional and social benefits. In addition, it enriches your academic and learning experience, such as:

* seeing what notes your classmate next to you has taken down;
* asking a classmate about something you didn’t understand in class as you leave the lecture hall together;
* raising your hand to ask a question, or listening to others’ questions and the subsequent discussion in class;
* being part of a study or discussion group when preparing for exams or completing assignments; and
* sitting next to someone in the library or study centre, discussing possible exam questions and comparing answers.

Take some time to reflect on the following: Why are you not having these interactions anymore? What is keeping you from having them?

Yes, our new circumstances make peer interaction a little trickier, but do try the following:

* Schedule some calls or chat sessions after class to talk about what you’ve heard or learned.
* Work out a “class” or study schedule with one or two classmates to work through the lecture at the same time. Knowing that others are busy with the same work at the same time might even help you stay motivated.
* Schedule joint breaks to have online social interaction or discuss some of the work.
* Form a study group to discuss classes, assignments or exam questions and answers. This could be via videocall or a WhatsApp group, which enables you to pose questions and check in on others.
* However, guard against the risk of distraction.

In addition to these tips to recreate study-oriented peer interaction, also remember to:

* continue with extramural activities wherever you can (such as online fitness classes or live cookalongs); and
* spend time with your friends (game nights, videocalls).

Try to recreate the study experience you had prior to March 2020, this time only in cyberspace. Do let us know which of these tips you have found beneficial. Also feel free to contact us if you have any questions.