

# Support for Individuals with ASD: Coping with Family and Virtual Interactions During COVID-19



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## Overview

- Coping with Covid-19 and the lockdown
  - Talking to your child about the pandemic
  - Handling changes with school
  - Steps to address mental health concerns
  - Developing routines
  - Addressing challenging behaviors at homes
- Steps for Responding to Disagreements
- Virtual Social Interactions and Events
- Avoiding Virtual Social Errors

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## Coping with COVID-19 and the lockdown

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## Coping with COVID-19

- Communicate at your child's developmental level honestly, providing essential, need-to-know information:
  - Social stories about Covid-19:  
<https://childdevcenter.org/news/social-stories-for-kids-about-covid-19/>
  - Cartoons:  
<https://www.ppmid.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Corona-Virus-Free-Printable-Updated-2-The-Autism-Educator-.pdf>
  - Other resources:  
<https://www.kerrysplace.org/covid-19-resources/>

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## Coping with the Lockdown

- Schools and IEPs
  - Uncharted territory
  - Go online and look at your school or district's website
  - Get familiar with the policies and procedures
  - Make sure you have a point of contact
  - Amendments to IEP
  - Extended school year/Compensatory education
  - Outside Providers: coverage, informing schools, risks
  - Opportunity for parents to document child's present ability level and needs
  - Collaborative foundation: communication and self-advocacy

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## Coping with the Lockdown

- Mental Health Concerns
  - Watch for signs your child is becoming more stressed or anxious
  - New behaviors or existing behaviors becoming more frequent, intense, or long-lasting
  - May appear more shut-down or withdrawn
  - Try talking to them to identify what's upsetting them
  - Some regular services may be temporarily unavailable
  - New services being created to provide online support
  - Reach out to regular care team first (therapist, pediatrician, family doctor)
  - Consult with them about latest information regarding services, medication changes etc.
  - Helpful to have a "crisis plan" prepared in advance
  - In the event that an ER visit is necessitated, call ahead to make sure they're able to assist non-Covid patients
  - Take care of your own mental health!

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## Coping with the Lockdown

- Developing routine and predictability
  - Collaborative – choices, sense of control
  - Attainable – feasible goals per day
  - Using reinforcement system – tokens, immediate rewards
  - Identifying calming activities – videos, breaks, repetitive activities
  - Reducing sensory input – mindfulness room or spot, noise cancelling headphones
  - Daily physical activity – workouts, playing, yoga
  - Maintain regular bedtime routine – triggers, relaxation, quiet activities

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## Coping with the Lockdown

- Challenging Behaviors at Home
  - Directing child to safe space during meltdown
  - Stay as calm as possible
  - Let the tantrum run its course
  - Avoid "bribes" or defaulting to screen time
  - Provide gentle statements – "Let me know if you need help calming down", "I'm here for you when you need me", "When you're ready, we can read a book or have a snack"
  - Avoid complex sentences or detailed instructions
  - When calm, discuss, identify common triggers, or repeat instructions
  - Make child part of the team in setting up rewards and consequences
  - Good behavior should receive the reward and not taken away for later non-compliance
  - Follow up on consequences
  - Be flexible – if goals not met routinely, make goals smaller and more attainable

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## Coping with COVID-19 Resources

- Online toolkit for supporting individuals with ASD during the crisis
  - <https://ed.unc.edu/2020/03/19/unc-team-creates-online-toolkit-for-those-supporting-individuals-with-autism-during-covid-19-epidemic/>
- Tips for daily schedules in ADHD
  - <https://www.additudemag.com/daily-schedule-coronavirus-home-school/>
- Visual schedule maker
  - <https://connectability.ca/visuals-engine/>
- Visual schedules, reward systems and social stories
  - <https://connectability.ca/2020/03/30/dealing-with-covid-19-resources-for-special-educatortherapists-families/>
- Autism Speaks has a challenging behavior toolkit
  - <https://www.autismspeaks.org/tool-kit/challenging-behaviors-tool-kit>
- Token Reward Systems
  - <http://www.educateautism.com/token-economy.html>
  - <https://www.verywellfamily.com/create-a-token-economy-system-to-improve-child-behavior-1094888>

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## Steps for Responding to Disagreements



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## PEERS® Steps for Responding to Disagreements

1. Keep your cool
2. Listen to the other person
3. Repeat what they said
  - "It sounds like you're upset."
4. Explain your side using "I" statements
5. Say you're sorry
  - "I'm sorry you're upset."
  - "I'm sorry this happened."
6. Try to solve the problem
  - Tell them what you'll do differently
  - Ask them what they want you to do
  - Suggest what you want them to do



- Keep your cool if you can't solve the problem
- Agree to disagree
- Make sure to follow ALL the steps

(Laugeson & Frankel, 2010; Laugeson, 2013; Laugeson, 2014; Laugeson, 2017)

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## PEERS® Steps for Bringing Up Disagreements

1. Wait for the right time and place
2. Keep your cool
3. Ask to speak privately
4. Explain your side using "I" statements
5. Listen to the other person
6. Repeat what they said
7. Tell them what you need them to do
8. Try to solve the problem
  - Tell them what you'll do differently
  - Ask them what they want you to do
  - Suggest what you want them to do



- Keep your cool if you can't solve the problem
- Agree to disagree
- Make sure to follow ALL the steps

(Laugeson & Frankel, 2010; Laugeson, 2013; Laugeson, 2014; Laugeson, 2017)

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## Virtual Social Interactions



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## Virtual Communication

- Encourage child to stay in touch with friends
- Assist in planning virtual play dates or virtual get-togethers
- Social media could be a positive outlet during this crisis
- Online socialization should be encouraged after provision of safety guidelines
- Collaboratively identify frequency of desired social interactions and amount of time spent online

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## Virtual Social Events (Art)

- **Google Arts & Culture** – Guide to museums and galleries offering virtual exhibits and tours.
  - <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner?hl=en>
- **Khan Academy** – Walt Disney Imagineering partners with Khan Academy for Imagineering in a Box. The program is designed to pull back the curtain to show you how artists, designers, and engineers work together to create theme parks. Go behind the scenes with Disney Imagineers and complete project-based exercise to design a theme park of your very own.
  - <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/hass-storytelling/imaagineering-in-a-box?CMP=ILC-DPFY19Q4wo0808190814190031F>
- **Louvre** - Visit the museum's exhibition rooms and galleries.
  - [https://www.louvre.fr/en/visites-en-ligne?fbclid=IwAR3o7oOPca1e-TTo6Z6PodffVjZ0lSkCd\\_IISVbnMmbbzhy1K310SmCKH4](https://www.louvre.fr/en/visites-en-ligne?fbclid=IwAR3o7oOPca1e-TTo6Z6PodffVjZ0lSkCd_IISVbnMmbbzhy1K310SmCKH4)
- **Yavmaker Paint Nite** - Virtual events from Paint Nite, including events for kids, teens, and adults. Events are presented through a streaming platform. Fees may apply.
  - <https://www.yavmaker.com/virtual/experience/101/>

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## Virtual Social Events (Misc.)

- **Netflix Party:** Netflix Party is a Chrome extension for watching Netflix remotely with friends. It synchronizes video playback and adds group chat.
  - Web: <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/netflix-party/ooocalimimnqaihdkbhfofnkconmlaqa?hl=en>
- Play Jackbox games remotely with family and friends
  - <https://jackboxgames.com/>
- The Smelly Cat Pub
  - <https://instagram.com/thesmellycatpub?inshid=fnizbl9otm7ki>
- Crowdsourced list of quarantine activities, online events, and social distancing resources
  - Includes resources for online classes, de-stressing/mindfulness, music, virtual dating, books/storytelling, information on coronavirus, and more
  - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vR19LrZZ-LfEjNR1mkJKhXze5h6lIKBIZHA12kMxk/edit>

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## Avoiding Virtual Social Errors



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## Social Media

### QUESTIONS:

What are some common types of social media?

What are some common social errors when using social media?

What social errors might peer rejected people make when using social media?

What social errors might socially neglected people make when using social media?



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## PEERS® Rules for Social Media

- Separate personal from professional
- Don't clog the feed
- Quality over quantity
- No selfies alone unless you're somewhere interesting



(Laugeson & Frankel 2010; Laugeson 2013; Laugeson 2014; Laugeson 2017)

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## PEERS® Rules for Social Media

- Use and check privacy settings regularly
- Turn off your GPS
- Don't post your location in real time
- Don't send or accept friend requests from strangers



(Laugeson & Frankel 2010; Laugeson 2013; Laugeson 2014; Laugeson 2017)

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## PEERS® Rules for Social Media

- Don't overshare
- Private thoughts should be private
- Keep it positive
- Don't go negative



(Laugeson & Frankel 2010; Laugeson 2013; Laugeson 2014; Laugeson 2017)

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## PEERS® Rules for Social Media

- Delete and don't respond to negative comments
- Untag yourself from negative posts or pictures
- Be wary of catfishing
- People may lie about who they are online



(Laugeson & Frankel 2010; Laugeson 2013; Laugeson 2014; Laugeson 2017)

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## PEERS® Rules for Social Media

- Click with caution
- Be careful what you like or repost
- Only post what you're willing for ANYONE to see
- Only post what you're willing to say in person



(Laugeson & Frankel 2010; Laugeson 2013; Laugeson 2014; Laugeson 2017)

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## PEERS® Rules for Using the Internet and Social Media for Teens

- Teens should NOT use the Internet or social media to make NEW friends
- Use the Internet and social media for developing stronger friendships with PRE-EXISTING friends
- Don't give out personal information
- Don't turn online friends into real-life friends
- Teens should be monitored on social media
  - Parents should monitor UNOBTRUSIVELY



(Laugeson & Frankel 2010; Laugeson 2013; Laugeson 2014; Laugeson 2017)

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## PEERS® Rules for Electronic Communication

- Google yourself periodically
- Don't post personal information online
  - Phone or address
  - Passwords
  - Social security
  - Financial information
  - Full name (in some cases)
- Screen names should not have first and last name for gaming



(Laugeson & Frankel 2010; Laugeson 2013; Laugeson 2014; Laugeson 2017)

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## Acknowledgements



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[www.semel.ucla.edu/peers](http://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers)

### Role-Play Video Library

[www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources](http://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources)

[peersclinic@ucla.edu](mailto:peersclinic@ucla.edu)

310-26-PEERS

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram:

UCLA PEERS

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