

**March 2020 Post: Resources for teens to cope with social isolation during pandemic**  
(by Alissa Briggs, PhD, NCSP, Adolescent Medicine)

Being stuck at home is especially difficult for teens, who thrive on social connections with their peers. Teen's job is to distance themselves from their parents and family and become more independent. We need to support our teens in continuing to engage in this developmental task during this period of social distancing.

Of course, teens are the expert in social media use, so they may not need our recommendations for how to connect with friends, but they do need our support and understanding. They need to hear from us that we understand that it is difficult for them to be separated from their friends. We also have a duty to protect them, ourselves, and our community by enforcing social distancing. See this resource for [helping teens cope with the stress of isolation](#).

As teens may be engaged in more social media use during this time, monitor who they are connecting with. They should only be talking with people they have met in person. Also, have conversations with them regarding consuming what they see on social media. Talk with them about what they are seeing and engage them in discussion. Direct them to accurate sources of information. The American Academy of Pediatrics has a helpful resource on [talking to and supporting children during a pandemic](#).

Below are some ideas you can offer your teens for connecting with peers virtually and coping with stress associated with social isolation. The Centers for Disease Control also has a resource on how to [manage anxiety and stress](#).

- Netflix has a Google Chrome extension available for free called "[Netflix Party](#)." They can watch their favorite shows together and comment on them. A person on the party can pause if they need to use the restroom or get a snack, so they can continue to watch simultaneously and take care of their needs at home.
- There are many resources available for Video Conferencing software. Your teen likely has the best of idea of what their friends are using, but you can suggest that they schedule a time to get together with their friends virtually. Setting up a Google Hangout is one idea.
- Encourage your teen to go outside for a walk or run to clear their head and get some fresh air.
- Encourage your teen to adopt a new normal daily schedule. If it starts with waking up at 11am every day, that's fine, but they should have some routine.
- There are many great Apps that teens can use for stress relief. The two that seem to be the most accepted by teens I see are [MindShift](#) and [Calm](#).

Reassure your teen that we will get through this together, and model health coping strategies for them.